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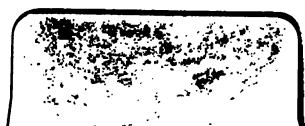
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THE
HAPPY MAN;

OR,
THE ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLES OF
HAPPINESS DESCRIBED.

BY
REV. JOHN PUGH, B.A.

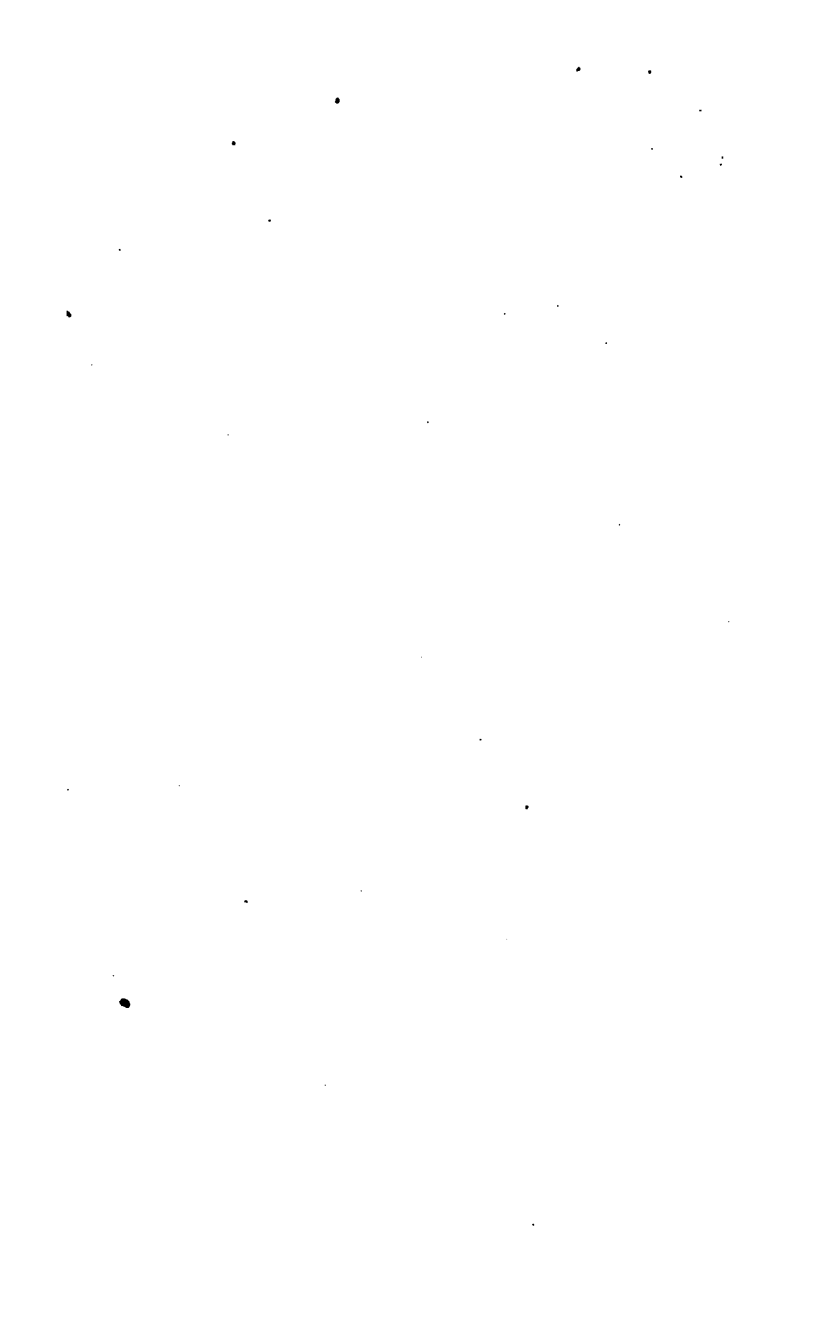
SECOND EDITION.

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PREFACE

TO THE SECOND EDITION.

THIS little book has been considerably enlarged in the present edition. Chapters seventh, eighth, ninth, and eleventh, are new matter. The remaining chapters have been left unaltered, except a few verbal corrections. The author, while inspecting the book for the purpose of preparing it for the present issue, felt a pleasing conviction that the subjects which it contains are eternal truths.

Moreover he, in consequence of a variety of experiences, has become more conscious of the adaptation, especially of some of them, to support and console the mind on trying occasions.

The reader will find that the topics in the book are various, and it is our hope that they have been, in some degree, rendered attractive through clear statements and familiar illustrations.

The writer has been encouraged in consequence of the favourable manner in which the preceding edition was reviewed in several of the well-known English journals.

The little work is again issued in the hope, that in its enlarged and improved form it may be beneficial to many, and that it may prove itself worthy of the approbation of the public.

It would be satisfactory to the writer should it, in any case, be similar to the olive leaf in the mouth of the innocent dove, or should it be the means of cherishing good hopes, notwithstanding the deluge of distresses by which we are surrounded.

JOHN PUGH.

Holywell, Dec. 11th, 1877.

PREFACE

TO THE FIRST EDITION.



THE subject of this little book is both weighty and interesting. The essays and treatises written upon it, at different times, are many and various. In this respect the little volume, which is now presented to notice, is only like a drop of a copious shower falling on an extensive lake. However, it is hoped that it may answer some good purpose. As every blade of grass and every twig of a tree have their use, so there is ground to believe that every effort made with sincerity and earnestness is conducive to the general welfare.

It is clear, even to a casual observer, that there are in our world many stern realities, and that there is need of sterling truths in order to counteract the baneful influence of some of them on the human mind. These truths exist. They have been revealed. Their power and efficacy have been experienced. And if this little treatise has been successful in illustrating some of them, it will be, as to its use, similar to that insignificant little instrument, the burning glass, which collects and concentrates a few solar rays for a specific purpose.

Should any one derive some benefit by reading the following pages, the satisfaction of the writer will be similar to that of him who lived near a path over which many travellers were used to pass, and he was in the habit of fetching water from a well in the neighbourhood, in order to fill a bowl, fixed in a convenient place, for the use of the unknown and thirsty visitors.

JOHN PUGH.

February 7th, 1866.

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The Happy Man.

INTRODUCTION.

THERE are two questions that may be considered in reference to the subject of happiness. One is, How those may yet become happy who through past errors and follies have made themselves miserable? The other is, How those may secure the largest amount of happiness who are now forming their character? Some have advanced far in the process of self-ruin—they have wounded their consciences, they have spoiled their domestic comforts, they have impaired their constitutions, and have blighted almost all their good prospects; hence, when they view the future they are subject to deadly gloom and black despair.

Still there is a means revealed by which their present distress may be partly mitigated, and through which they may yet cherish a good hope with regard to the future. Though the world in its primitive state presented nothing but darkness

and confusion, yet there were a power and a fulness existing adequate to bring it into order and beauty, and to replenish it with life and luxuriance. The means which have been revealed are equally effectual to create happiness in the place of misery, and to effect order and harmony where there is now moral desolation. This is not a theory which requires to be proved, but a truth which has been confirmed by innumerable instances.

Hence, to whatever extremes any man may have been carried by the current of folly and temptations, he may yet cheer himself with the thought, that by pausing in his career, and by availing himself of the means brought within his reach, he may still be called a happy man.

And to those who enter upon their course through the world, and are forming their character, it may be said that there are certain great principles made known to us, by embracing which they may avoid the errors which have led many others to sorrow and ruin, and may spend a life which would be pleasant, useful, and honourable.

It will be our object, subsequently, to point out some of the essential and subsidiary principles and practices which form the character of a happy man.

CHAPTER I.

THE HAPPY MAN HAS PEACE OF CONSCIENCE.

THIS is essential to happiness. Without this, to aim at being happy would be like an attempt to see without light, to breathe without air, or to swim without water.

Conscience is that power or operation of the soul by which a man approves or condemns his own actions. Its approbation is an occasion of the most genuine satisfaction. On the other hand, its reproof or its censure produces, in some cases, the most intense grief and remorse. It bears witness with God, for it is His deputy in our own bosom; and for this reason we are ever to bear in mind that "if our heart" or conscience "condemns us, God is greater than our hearts." Hence, the kind of testimony it adduces is to us of the greatest importance.

Peace of conscience is that serenity of mind which is the result of inward confidence that we are free from the guilt of sin. It implies that all vicious habits and practices have been forsaken,

and that all past faults and transgressions have been pardoned. It may be advantageous to consider, in different sections, some things that are relative to the subject.



FIRST SECTION.

*Some criteria by which it may be known whether or not
Man has Peace of Conscience.*

I. It may be observed, in the first place, that security and indifference are no evidence of peace.

A man, owing to various causes, may enjoy comparative ease, while at the same time there may lodge in his bosom elements of distress. His present quietude may be the result of levity and inconsideration. Hence his peace is similar to that of a man who ignorantly travels over a frozen lake, supposing it to be a firm plain.

It is well known that a repetition of the same sin tends immediately to impair one's moral perception, and to deaden every refined sensibility. But though a man may not at present think much of the evil of his actions, yet this is by no means a proof that he shall be hereafter free from the painful emotions connected with a guilty conscience. We are told that the little insect in

Africa called tsetse, secretly bites the cattle, and that its bite is always fatal. Still, the bitten animal appears for a while as healthy and frisky as ever, but the day at last arrives on which the instilled poison shows its deadly effects. Through the commission of sin a moral poison is infused into a man's conscience, and though he may for a time addict himself to mirth and folly, yet a period will arrive in which its terrible effects will be experienced.

Change of circumstances may be an occasion of a serious change in the thoughts and feelings of those who now appear quite obdurate. The chinks and crevices in a dilapidated house may cause no inconvenience to the inhabitant as long as the fair weather continues, but when winter arrives he is soon convinced that he has been occupying a deceitful dwelling, and that the consequences to him are serious. While health continues, and while affairs are prosperous, a presumptuous sinner may be at ease, but when the storm of adversity begins to blow, his previous confidence gives place to trouble and alarm. Heaps of combustible materials may do no harm, or may occasion no inconvenience, while a certain element is at a distance, but should a few sparks of fire visit them the catastrophe would be indescribable. An evil con-

science is like those materials, and though it may at present cause no inconvenience, yet there are sparks existing—Divine terrors—which may produce the most distressing consequences.

II. It is an evidence of an evil conscience if a man cannot endure self-inspection.

Many a man is afraid of self-examination. He is as indisposed to commune with his own heart as some children are to visit in the dark a room haunted, according to rumour, by spectres. This is an indication of a bad state of things. Owing to want of peace in their own bosoms, many are unhappy when left alone; they are habitually uneasy, and they in various ways show signs of discontent and moroseness. And, for the same reason, they make use of many expedients in order to avoid fellowship with themselves. They read with avidity works of fiction, they visit exciting scenes, they indulge in intoxicating drinks, and waste much of their time in frivolous amusements.

III. It is also a sign of an evil conscience if a man cannot think of God without being made unhappy.

Conscience refers us to God as omniscient, as the great Searcher of the heart, and as the righteous Judge of all our actions. And it is a favourable

indication if we can seriously think of Him without being disquieted. I have read of a Swedenborgian, who, influenced by superstition, thought that he had arrived at much perfection when he could, with an open eye, gaze without blinking at the sun when appearing in full splendour. He, it is true, had been led astray by some delusive imagination; however, when a man is in possession of a good conscience he can fix his thoughts on God with some degree of complacency. But a man who lacks this inward peace, can with propriety, adopt a saying which we find in Scripture, "I remembered God and was troubled." Since he is conscious of much sin, of which he has not repented, he cannot enjoy inward composure, but so long as he can keep God out of his thoughts; for notwithstanding all his efforts, he can not divest himself of the impression that God has been a witness of all his conduct, and that he must again appear before his righteous tribunal.

IV. Moreover, it is an evidence of an evil conscience if a man cannot be at ease unless he keeps out of his mind death and eternity.

It is natural for us to fear death, for it is the most violent shock that we can endure, and the strangest change that we can experience. And, for this reason,

even a good man may be afraid of the event itself, though he has no cause to fear its consequences. Yet the thought of it does not greatly agitate his mind, and sometimes he can behold its approach with serenity. But the thought of death is to some like the entrance of a dreadful messenger into a circle of gay companions: it causes a revulsion in their feelings, and mixes sadness with their mirth and gaiety. These are some of the indications of an evil conscience. We are now led to the consideration of another point.



SECOND SECTION.

The Elements of Torment in an Evil Conscience.

I. There is first of all a consciousness of sin committed.

This is experienced by many who have not been guilty of any acts of peculiar atrocity. And it is difficult sometimes to point out any immediate occasion of the disquietude. After years of comparative ease and indifference, a vivid recollection is produced of past faults, and several considerations are ushered into the mind by which these past actions are greatly aggravated. External means, in some cases, have so little to do with the agitation

that it must be ascribed either to the inherent activity of conscience itself, or to a secret and Divine influence upon the mind. At other times, the falling into some open and notorious sin is an occasion of producing a recollection of many other actions that had fallen into oblivion ; just as a serious injury is, sometimes, an occasion of disclosing several maladies which had been latent in the constitution.

It is often the case, also, that the judicious application of some truth is a means of rousing the conscience from its dormancy, and of bringing forgotten sins into remembrance. By turning a rod in the bottom of a well or pool, the deposited sand or slime is raised to the surface ; so also by applying some truths, old sins are brought to recollection. Sometimes, also, a heavy affliction is an occasion of producing the same effect. This answers the same purpose with regard to the conscience as a crucible does with regard to some of the metals—the excessive dross and impurity are soon made apparent. When either of these means is an occasion of producing a conviction, the subject of it can with propriety say, “My sin is ever before me.”

II. Another element is deep shame and keen remorse.

This is especially the case after some notorious

actions. When passion has subsided, and external objects have lost their charm, then comes a time for reflection. The transgressor now cannot but perceive his utter folly in allowing himself to be impelled by such unworthy motives, and to be illuded by such sordid objects. He sees that he has incurred a stain which cannot be wiped away, and that he has caused, perhaps, a damage both to himself and others which cannot be repaired. He now begins to regard himself in the same light as he is beheld by others. And since he is well aware that in proportion as his character is understood, he is odious and contemptible by his fellow-men, he himself regards his own conduct with similar feelings. His own sin, like a spectre, haunts him always and everywhere. According to an old law, he who had murdered a man was to have the corpse of the slain individual tied on his back, and he was to carry it with him in all his movements until either himself was overcome by the poisonous exhalations, or the body was totally decomposed. There is something analogous in the case of him in whose mind a consciousness of sin has been produced. He experiences chagrin and remorse, he regards himself with abhorrence, and he has a painful sense of utter inability to effect for himself deliverance.

III. And, in connection with all this, he has a lively sense of God's anger.

There is no need of arguments to prove that God can communicate to the mind of man either an experience of his favour, by which that man is rendered happy in the midst of most trying circumstances, or a feeling of his displeasure, by which the hardest individual may be overcome with sorrow and anguish. Fire, which ordinarily is to us an occasion of so much enjoyment, may, through a little variety of circumstances, produce intolerable pain. God, who is the author of all our comforts, may, by justly varying his dealings, produce such emotions as to make the stout-hearted exclaim, "Who shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" In such a case, the mental and moral powers of man become so many avenues of distress, and their capability of indefinite expansion shows the possibility of their becoming occasions of ever-increasing misery.

IV. Hence, the conviction that the soul is immortal becomes another element of torment.

The thought of immortality incites the most gloomy sentiments in an individual having the preceding emotions. He is aware that he approaches a circumstance in which he shall find himself totally helpless, and shall enter into a state of existence of which

he is now totally ignorant. And he cannot avoid the impression that he will be at the entire disposal of Him whose displeasure he now partly experiences. We may naturally suppose what the feelings are of a traveller who finds himself alone in the midst of an endless plain of sandy desert, while suffering at the same time the scorching rays of a vertical sun. Yet, this is only a feeble comparison to show the feelings of him who experiences the remorse and terrors of a guilty conscience, while he mentally beholds before him boundless eternity. The preceding observations are only a very partial description of the distress which many have experienced. Let them, however, suffice to incite our minds in the search for some means of alleviation.



THIRD SECTION.

What the Remedy is which alone can afford Relief to an Agitated Conscience.

I. It is clear that the remedy must contain elements of relief adapted to counteract the elements of distress. There is a remedy for an evil conscience revealed to us which has been tried innumerable times, and in the worst cases, and

in every variety of circumstances ; and myriads, even when quitting the world, have borne their testimony to its thorough efficacy. The virtue of some medicines was first discovered by an accidental observation of their effects, but afterwards by analyzing their component parts, reasons could be adduced showing why they are adapted to certain diseases. Some, in like manner, have experienced the powerful effects of the remedy which we have in view, and when they afterwards, in their calm hours, studied the Scriptures and the character of God, they saw reasons showing its complete adaptation to the purpose.

II. Now, as the principal cause of the distress is a sense of God's displeasure, it is evident that no relief can be experienced until the anxious individual perceives some means by which God can be appeased. This is effected solely through Christ's atonement. The term atonement signifies that satisfaction has been rendered to God for man's transgressions. God is often represented as being angry in consequence of our sins. We are, however, not to consider His anger as an emotion similar to that which exists in a frail creature. By His anger we are to understand the exercise of His vindictive justice in punishing sin. Hence the

atonement is that ransom which the justice of God requires in order that the guilty may be honourably pardoned. And what is it that can be a ransom or satisfaction to God as a righteous Judge? It is clear that it must be something in respect to which the law is not tarnished when the transgressor is spared. There can be no satisfaction unless the requirements of the law are fully answered, and unless its threatenings for transgressions are fully executed. What then is the satisfaction? It is the complete obedience and sufferings of Christ as our substitute. The greatness of God and the greatness of sin require a greatness of sacrifice. But since the Son of God, in the nature of man, offered himself for us to God, this is a sacrifice which our enlightened reason commends even when we have the most elevated notions of the Divine character, and the liveliest apprehension of our own demerit.

III. It may be asked where is the equity of the proceeding in substituting the innocent for the guilty, and in rewarding one party in consideration of what was done by another? It may be said in answer, that God, who is the law-giver, can choose the manner He pleases to secure the honour of His law. Though the natural course of things requires the infliction of punishment on the trans-

gressor's own person, yet does this imply that infinite wisdom cannot contrive a method which is above the ordinary course of things, and still reflecting in the highest degree the Divine character? And since in the method revealed to us the law appears most honourable, while the Saviour and the saved are jointly exalted and beatified, do not the justice and mercy of God appear inexpressibly glorious? But as all God's operations baffle man's ingenuity, and confound his reasonings; so also this glorious method is by us but imperfectly understood, and there belongs to it much that is a mystery to be adored. A mere casuist may suggest numerous objections, and he may perhaps find in the doctrine matter of offence to his speculative tendencies. Nevertheless, a devout study of the truth is a means of quieting the tumult in the bosom of a troubled sinner, and of soothing the agitations of an awakened conscience.

When the truth concerning the atonement is devoutly studied, it commends itself to our reason, and it is adapted to elevate and to ennoble our minds; for it is found to be a part of a grand scheme which has originated in unfathomable wisdom. Natural conscience suggests the necessity of some means to secure the favour of an offended

God, yet how vain, frivolous, and even absurd, are many of the expedients used by men when left to the guidance of their own imagination. But the principles and designs of the great plan of redemption are such that they are fitted to give the highest exercise to the most capacious understandings, and to incite in the most exalted minds a spirit of adoration.

IV. We are, however, not to be surprised should this truth be looked at with indifference, or even with disregard, by some that view it in a superficial manner, or have no farther insight into it than can be obtained by the exercise of a mere natural understanding. For, as there is nothing parallel to this method in any affairs with which we are conversant, so the mind of man, unless enlightened and purified, is not capable of perceiving its incomparable excellencies. The undevout reader or listener concerning it would be like a heedless traveller who chances to dash his foot against the point of a precious ore on the hill-side; he sees nothing deserving his attention in what appears to him so insignificant, whereas another individual who understands the nature of the object would instantly appreciate it, and by turning a few clods he would see that he is led into the possession of an exhaust-

less treasure. The sanctuary in the temple had a light of its own, by which alone the different objects contained in it were to be perceived. We may compare the great plan of salvation to a temple, and the truth under consideration may be called a sanctuary, and we must be endued with a light superior to that of nature and science in order to perceive its excellencies.

But, as a proof of the efficacy of this remedy to afford peace of conscience, we may refer to one Scripture testimony: "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"



FOURTH SECTION.

The Manner in which a Distressed Individual is to come at the Remedy.

I. The means, by which we are to have an interest in the atonement for the relief of a harassing conscience, is faith in the Redeemer. But should it be asked, What saving faith is ; we might reply, that it is an effectual belief of God's testimony concerning the way of salvation. He who has saving

faith believes the Scripture sayings, and those sayings in particular concerning Christ as a Saviour. He believes them also in such a manner as to act according to them. This is effectual belief in contradistinction to a mere assent, which is totally inoperative. Should a renowned physician issue prescriptions with a guarantee of their efficacy for curing different diseases, we know that an effectual belief of his announcement would be to use his prescriptions with an expectation of the promised efficacy. God testifies in His Word that Christ is "set forth a propitiation" for our sins, whatever may be their number and aggravation. He, moreover, tells us that He is a propitiation "through faith in His blood." Faith in the blood of Christ means a belief that the death of Christ is a satisfactory sacrifice, through which God pardons the greatest sins. He who believes this from his heart, relies on that sacrifice with an expectation to have his own sins pardoned. To be saved by faith is to be saved by receiving what is offered to us, in contrast to being saved by the merits of our own doings. God, in the promises of His Word, freely offers pardon to us in the name, or for the sake of Christ; and we exercise faith when we, in the name or for the sake of Christ, ask God for pardon according to His

promise. Thus, faith saves us, not as being a meritorious act, but as being a means by which we come to have an interest in God's salvation. Should a traveller in the desert be found lying on the ground and dying from thirst, and should the visitor who finds him be a benevolent individual, having a supply of water at his disposal, which he gives freely to the dying man, it might be said that he owed his deliverance to the kindness of that occasional visitor. And yet it might be said that he was saved through taking or receiving the water which was offered to him, though there was nothing meritorious in the act. We are in a perishing condition, but God visits us in the Gospel message, which contains the water of life, with promises of mercy and pardon, and we, by simply accepting what God offers, are saved.

II. We may suppose that the Apostle Paul, in the course of his ministry, met with many a distressed soul, and that he, for the purpose of comfort and direction, addressed him in a strain similar to the following: "I understand the feelings to which you are subject, arising from the view you have of your own character. You are convinced of the utter depravity of your heart, and the ungodliness of your conduct during your past life. You know that you

are guilty and condemned before God ; your mouth is stopped, and you have nothing to say for yourself by way of self-defence. You are greatly alarmed at thinking of your desperate condition ; yet do not despair, for there is a method revealed in which you can be saved—‘ God justifies the ungodly.’ And how great a sinner soever you may appear to yourself, yet you are not worse than ungodly, and God has a method to justify one of this character. What causes to you such alarm is the consciousness you have of your own demerit. Had your conduct been blameless, or had you been endued with a righteousness of your own, you would experience confidence when thinking of God as your holy and righteous Judge. But finding yourself so great a sinner, and perceiving your case so desperate, you are possessed with the most painful anxiety. Still, believe in God, or confide in Him, as the Justifier of the ungodly. And this believing or confiding in Him, will answer the same purpose to you as if you had been perfectly righteous all your life-time : your faith will be accounted to you for righteousness. God, in consequence of this believing in Him, will look upon you as favourably as if you had never, in any instance, done anything to incur His displeasure. And if you are disposed to ask how this is possible ;

I must refer you to the perfect obedience and meritorious sufferings of Christ; for it pleased God to appoint Him to obey and suffer in our stead, in order 'that He might be just, and the Justifier of him who believes in Jesus.' You are not to suppose, however, that there is any merit or worthiness in this believing of yours. You, by this, merely fall in with God's method of saving sinners. You are justified by faith that it might be by grace. And it is to the life and death of Christ you are at all times to look as being the sole meritorious cause of your being thus accepted. 'For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.' And if you are inclined to inquire, where you can find Christ and salvation through Him; do not allow your own heart to form imaginary difficulties. 'Say not in your heart, Who shall ascend into heaven, or who shall descend into the deep?' You need not wander here and there in your imagination; for all that you require is close at hand; the word is near you in your mouth, and in your heart you are to seek Christ, and salvation in the Scripture testimonies. And these are, moreover, explained and illustrated continually in your hearing, for they are the words of faith which we preach."

FIFTH SECTION.

The Happiness of the Man who has Peace of Conscience.

I. We can easily conceive what the feelings of that man are who underwent a trial for his life, and now finds himself acquitted. We can imagine how joyous the heart of the mariner is who has come into a safe harbour, after having been in such a storm as to expect every moment a shipwreck. But the joy of a man who, after having experienced such alarm and anxiety, enjoys peace with God, is in some cases still more intense. It is no wonder if he joins in the exclamation, "We glory in tribulation." I have read of a Roman citizen who, when he had good tidings to convey to the city, was so much overcome with joy that he became totally regardless for a time of the pain caused to him by a thorn in his foot. So also the man who has peace with God becomes, in some respects, less subject to grief and sorrow from the painful events of the present life. When we suffer affliction, peace of conscience will give us the best alleviation. When our plans are thwarted, and several of our bright prospects end in disappointment, the same peace will be the best preservative of our cheerfulness.

Should we be thrown into an isolated position, so as to be deprived of the society of friends and acquaintances, peace will make one a good companion to himself. And when we witness even symptoms of death, the same peace will keep us from excessive alarm and perturbation.

II. The happiness of such a man may also be seen by contrasting his case with that of another who is destitute of peace. It was an ancient custom when the visit or conduct of another appeared doubtful, to ask, "Is there peace?" Joram sent a message, asking Jehu, "Is it peace?" A second messenger was sent, asking, "Is it peace?" And at last he himself went, asking the same question. And when he was answered by having another question asked him, "What peace is there?" he was filled with alarm. How great must be the inward distress of that man who has a consciousness that every providential dispensation intimates to him that there is no peace! The aspen leaves may be seen agitated by those faint motions of the air which do not disturb at all the leaves on the surrounding trees. In a similar manner this man is disquieted by trivial events which cause little or no uneasiness to him who is conscious of being at peace with his Maker. The lack of peace tends to spoil all the enjoyment that

may be had in ordinary ways. It is said that a certain man was invited by Dionysius to a feast at his palace, but that he had to sit for the feast under the point of a suspended sword. It was natural that a sight of his terrible position should deprive that guest of all pleasure from that royal entertainment. What pleasure can a man have from his learning, wealth, and honour, if conscience continually directs his thoughts to a sword of Justice, by which he is in danger every hour of being destroyed? But the man who has peace is comparatively happy. He may experience many sorrows, yet he has at hand matter of consolation. He may witness many alarming events, still his peace is adapted to make him calm and serene. And he has, moreover, the pleasing confidence that the blessing of God will follow him in all changes, and will accompany all providential events and visitations.

CHAPTER II.

THE HAPPY MAN HAS A RECTIFIED DISPOSITION.

WE use the word disposition to denote the habitual state of a man's mind. The mind of man is a seat of many thoughts and sentiments ; there belong to it several moral principles ; and it is subject to many and various emotions. And the happiness of man depends much on the thoughts which are habitual, and the passions which happen to be predominant. The subject leads us, then, to the following considerations :—

FIRST SECTION.

The Necessity of a Rectified Disposition.

I. It is acknowledged by all observers that human nature is at present in a disordered moral state. Hence, whatever praises may be bestowed on man's powers and capabilities, it is clear that his greatness is fallen, his dignity is sullied, and that his chief excellency has been marred. A pearl rolling in the mire would form an apt comparison of man's moral degradation. Man's capacities indicate that he is

a noble creature, but man's character and misery are a proof, showing how much he has fallen from his original integrity and happiness. Modern excavators have discovered the buried ruins of some of the ancient royal palaces. Of course, their towering height and their brilliant grandeur are no longer to be seen; yet they can, even from the remaining ruins, form an idea of their original structure, and of their surprising magnificence. Man at present is like one of those ruined palaces; he exhibits abundant traces, showing the disorder and desolations which sin has caused in his nature, yet the very ruins furnish wonderful indications of his primitive excellency.

II. The great depravity of man is most expressively set forth in one inspired saying: "And without God in the world." It was a sad change that was produced in that mighty king who, on account of his pride, was deprived of his reason, and was driven among the beasts of the field; yet even this affords but an imperfect emblem of the melancholy change caused in man, in consequence of being deprived of divine life, by the withdrawal of supernatural holy influences from his soul. Man, though depraved, has still his natural powers, and these are active and lively. Yet since he is without God, as

the origin and object of a holy life, his moral state is truly lamentable. His powers are not exercised on Him who is the proper object of his thoughts and the great source of his happiness. We may suppose it possible for the sun to be struck from the sky, still we can hardly form a notion of the dismal effects which would be produced by that change. But the moral change which has taken place with regard to man is more melancholy, for he lives without God, though he has been made to love, to serve, and to enjoy Him. We may see, hence, why a man may be always dissatisfied, though he may continually pursue happiness. He may often contrive various means for the purpose of obtaining satisfaction, but he will be as often disappointed. He is like a child who imagines, should he be able to climb to the top of a neighbouring hill, that he could touch the sky with his hand, yet when he reaches the intended spot he finds that the sky is as far from him as ever. Or he is like those young men who went out in search for Elijah. They went over hills and through the valleys, and they searched the various caves and corners, but after three days of hard labour, they returned confessing that he could not be found.

Some are wise enough not to seek the desired

object in idle amusements, or in low practices and sordid gratifications. But even when they give themselves to more noble pursuits, they find that they are still unsuccessful. Men may enter upon great and noble enterprises, they may form praiseworthy plans for securing honour and riches, and they may revel even in the treasures of science and literature, and after all they may find that all these objects are so far from answering their expectations, that they are left pensive and disconsolate. Experience of this kind is an evidence that men without God cannot be happy.

III. Man's sin and misery also consist much in disordered passions. The passions of the mind are adapted to be a stimulus to us in the pursuit of what is good, useful, and honourable ; and when they are rightly directed and controlled, they are an occasion of true pleasure. But when they become inordinate and unruly, they are a cause of mischief and confusion. They are like a mighty stream which, while it keeps in its own proper channel, is in various ways an occasion of much utility, but when it rises too high, so as to overflow its banks, it causes much damage, and it may produce the most serious consequences. The malevolent passions tend immediately to make a man a torment to himself. There

can be no peace in the bosom which is habitually inflated with pride, incited with anger and revenge, poisoned with envy and malice, and rendered peevish and morose by the ordinary crosses and trials of life. He who is subject to these passions does in some respects to himself what cruel barbarians do to their victims: they flay them alive, and then leave them exposed to the flies and the various surrounding insects.

IV. A wrong state of heart disposes its subject to evil practices. Consciousness of inward emptiness, and a feeling of dissatisfaction, drive an individual to seek pleasure in excessive indulgences, and in forbidden gratifications. The air-balloon is a hollow object from which much of the ordinary air has been displaced, and for this reason it readily ascends into the air, and for the same reason also the inmate has but little or no control over its horizontal movements, but he must let it go according to the direction of the aërial current. A man whose heart is void of what is proper to a rational creature will have no regularity in his movements, but he will be driven here and there according to the current of the multitude or the drift of peculiar temptations. But it is often the case that the very expedients which are used to secure pleasure are only means to increase

misery. I have read of a man who was driven by the cravings of hunger to eat certain roots that happened to be in the vicinity, but these, owing to their stimulating properties, instead of satisfying his want, were only means of increasing his voracity. Many a man, for the sake of obtaining some relief, indulged in intoxicating drinks, or in other pleasures, yet when he came to himself he found that this practice only conduced to his shame, remorse, and wretchedness. We hence see the necessity of a disposition by which a man might be induced to seek happiness in different pursuits.

SECOND SECTION.

In what a Right Disposition consists.

I. It consists, according to the comprehensive words of Scripture, in "a new heart." It is the result of a moral change wrought in the mind, by which it is made subject to new principles, and is regulated in its operations. Just as a common piece of steel, by being rubbed with a magnet, will itself become magnetic, so as to exhibit afterwards a new and peculiar class of properties, so the mind through this change begins to be governed by several principles which are the elements of a new character.

The great Agent by whom the change is produced is the Holy Spirit. Hence, though the means by which this is effected are the truths revealed and taught in Scripture, yet the change itself is supernatural. It may hence be inquired what is the nature of the change which is thus caused? It is that by which the natural powers of man are caused to be exercised in a holy manner. Or it is the impartation of some secret influence by which man begins to think, to feel, and to act in a manner that becomes him as a moral creature. A man may exercise all his powers in a natural way though he may never have exercised them in a holy manner: just as in consequence of a paralytic stroke one class of nerves is sometimes benumbed while the others preserve their activity. The natural man exercises his understanding and affections on a variety of objects, but it is the renewed man that has in some degree the quality of holiness in the operations of his soul. There is a torpor or deadliness belonging to us in reference to spiritual and holy objects which is not overcome until some vital energy is imparted to our souls, as the result of Divine influence. The trees in one season of the year are quite barren, they appear also totally void of life, and their state is not changed until they experience

the vivifying influence of spring, and then the sap which they secretly receive is an occasion of changing their whole aspect. We, in reference to what is spiritual and holy, are barren and deadly, but through the impartation of Divine energy, we are spiritually renewed, and we begin to bring forth fruit to God.

Through this change we obtain a state of heart which is a contrast to that which we had originally. In other words, through the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit, the evil effects of sin on our nature are counteracted, and we are gradually renovated. Owing to the native darkness of our understanding, we are incapable of perceiving aright what is spiritual and divine, but now some degree of divine light is imparted to us by which we begin to understand spiritual things in a spiritual manner. Hence the propriety of the testimony, "Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord." We naturally are void of love to God and to all holy objects, but through this change we begin to have delight in our Maker, and to take pleasure in means of fellowship with him. Previously to our being renewed, inordinate desires and unruly passions are an occasion of disorder and confusion in the soul; but through this renovation, peace and order are in

some degree established. The change is so thorough and complete, that he in whom it has been effected is called "a new creature."

Still it is to be observed, that though the heart is in this manner made right, yet it is not at present made perfect. The soul is for some time like a patient in whom a certain malady has been effectually checked, but he yet requires time and the use of various means in order to be delivered from its noxious effects. Or it is like a city which has been rescued from a state of anarchy, yet it may for some time be harassed by lurking enemies.

II. Through this change the principles of God's Word become active and ruling principles in the soul. And hence it is said that the "law of God is written in our hearts," and that "the Word of Christ dwells in us richly." It is a matter of experience that surrounding objects mysteriously produce their image on the retina of the eye. Thus they in a manner exist within us, and we regulate our actions according to the impressions which we receive. This is analogous to what takes place in the renewed soul; it receives impressions from Scripture truths, so that its thoughts and different operations are regulated by its great principles.

III. The rectitude which we have in view is also

a conformity to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is our great exemplar in meekness, in humility, in submission to God's will, in patience under injuries, in forgiveness of enemies, and in devotedness to a useful life. Hence Scripture says, of those who are renewed, that "Christ is formed within them." It is said of Sir Isaac Newton, that after he had been on one occasion gazing for some time at the sun, he had a vivid image of it in his eye for some while afterwards, even when his eye was closed. And if that natural effect was produced on him, it is not a wonder that they who have been taught to exercise their thoughts and affections on the Lord Jesus should also be made like him in disposition.

IV. We may hence see that there is a difference between morality and holiness. Morality is a course of life, according to the natural light within a man, and the dictates of his conscience. Holiness is the result of a supernatural influence by which the state of a man's heart and his general conduct are rendered conformable to the revealed will of God. A man may be moral when he is not holy. Notwithstanding our depravity, there belong to our nature principles by which a man may be induced to exercise equity, justice, benevolence, and to perform many honourable actions. We have reason, con-

science, and various natural affections, which, unless they are grossly stifled, incline us often to what is praiseworthy.

These natural principles may be greatly improved by means of education, good society, and the influence of religious means. But as water cannot rise higher than its source, so also morality, when most refined, cannot rise higher than the principles which are natural to man. Duties of equity and benevolence may be performed, while the heart may be in a state of alienation from God: just as a party of men may be true and kind towards each other, though living in a state of rebellion against the state.

V. But holiness is a complete rectitude of soul towards God and man. It implies love to God and a voluntary subservience to His will on all occasions. It implies also love to our fellow-creatures, and readiness to do what is befitting according to the relations in which we stand to them. Should we have two pieces of coin of equal size, but different in quality, as gold and copper, the latter would procure some quantity of what is useful; but the former, because it is of a more valuable quality, would not only procure the same things, but many more articles of superior excellency. The man who

has holiness in his heart, will perform all duties implied in mere morality ; he will perform them also from high motives, and he will reach farther to higher objects and nobler duties.

From these observations it is clear that a rectified heart is made right towards God. Its operations correspond in some degree with the displays which God has made of his character. He who has it is humble and penitent, because he is conscious that the God against whom he has sinned is most amiable and glorious in holiness. He is possessed with holy awe and fear, because God is a being of infinite power and majesty, and because He is most terrible in His anger. He puts filial confidence in Him because He is most gracious and merciful, and because He is ever faithful to His promises. He regards the favour of God his highest good, and he makes the glory of God his chief object. Previously, self in various ways was the centre of his actions ; but, henceforth, God is the great object to whom he wishes his plans and all his doings to be in subservience.

Hence, the moral change effected in his heart is similar to the scientific change made in astronomy when the Copernican system was adopted. Before that time it was supposed that the earth was the

centre, around which the sun and moon and all the heavenly bodies were turning. But according to the other system the sun occupies the centre, and around this the earth and all the planets perform their revolutions. That is a great change by which God, instead of self, becomes the centre of our affections.

VI. The rectified heart is also made right in the sense of having its own operations in harmony.

It is true that this is not absolutely the case while we continue in our present state; yet through this great renovation, order and consistency are in some degree established. We have often seen a timepiece out of order. And when this is the case, the beats of the hammer and the indications of the needle do not correspond. The strokes signify that it is a certain hour of the day; yet the needles point to a different hour. A more serious inconsistency is often to be witnessed in the operations of a disordered soul. The will and affections are inclined towards certain objects; but conscience intimates that other objects ought to have the thoughts. However, when the heart is renewed, the understanding, the conscience, the will, and the affections are comparatively harmonious. The objects brought under notice by the understanding are approved of by the conscience; there is an inclination towards them in the will, and

they are objects of interest to the affections. The order may be partly disturbed by the influence of peculiar temptations; yet the grace which gave it a beginning, is exercised in causing it to be restored.

The rectified heart is also made right towards others. It does not harbour thoughts and passions which tend to injure its neighbour. And if on some occasions sparks of this kind are kindled, they are soon quenched by the prevalence of better sentiments. It is the seat of benevolent affections, and it takes pleasure in exercising kindness and compassion, and in contriving different plans for doing good. It is like a well-dressed garden, from which noxious herbs are daily weeded in order to give every advantage to the growth of useful articles. It is a heart by which the injunction of the Apostle is put into practice. It thinks of things that are "true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report."



THIRD SECTION.

The happiness of the Man who has a Rectified Disposition.

I. The man who has the disposition which has been described, is in a qualified sense happy. It is, however, possible that his happiness may for some

time be lessened owing to some things that are unfavourable. He may suffer from natural infirmities. Something may belong to the constitution of his mind which tends to habitual gloom, or to give a melancholy tinge to all his thoughts. Or he may suffer from a physical ailment, either radical or acquired, which disposes him to habitual pensiveness.

“Man is a harp whose cords elude the sight,
Each yielding harmony disposed aright ;
The screws reversed (a task which if He please
God in a moment executes with ease),
Ten thousand thousand strings at once go loose,
Lost till He tune them all their power and use.”

Some good people are often subject to depression of spirits, as the result of negligence on their own part. They do not avail themselves of open and wholesome air. They seldom are engaged in exercises which tend to strengthen and invigorate their constitutions. Musical instruments must not be kept in damp places or they will soon get out of tune, notwithstanding the ingenuity shown in their construction. So also, those who are made spiritually right, are to guard against habits which are physically wrong ; for grace will not prevent the consequences.

The happiness connected with a renewed heart is also lessened sometimes by the effects of a disorderly course of life in times past. When a man

under the influence of new principles determines to enter upon a new course of life, he has to encounter many difficulties. Passions which have been long cherished are likely to make encroachments; words and expressions which have often been used will repeatedly be suggested on different occasions; and old habits, though they are no longer means of pleasure, yet they are often occasions of temptation. For this reason, he is necessitated to exercise constant vigilance, and to be engaged in perpetual warfare. He is like a man who has spent his youthful years as a common rustic, who experiences the inconvenience of old habits and manners, when through some change, he is placed in a circle distinguished for order and refinement.

Early piety is in this respect advantageous; for it obviates some of the difficulties that are experienced when a change takes place in advanced years.

The peace and comfort of the mind may also be impaired by means of several circumstantial disadvantages. These are the pressure of worldly cares, the absence of Christian fellowship, contact with gross ungodliness, and the influence of some fiery trials. A Christian in circumstances of the kind is like a noble plant in an uncongenial climate, or in a position where the atmosphere around it is un-

wholesome. Though it lives, yet it appears stunted, and it has lost much of its beauty and fragrance. Owing to various causes of this kind, the Christian's joy in the present state may be like the solar light, passing through sombre colours, imparting a gloomy hue, which does not belong to the light itself.

II. But, notwithstanding these deductions, the state of the heart which has been described is most conducive to our happiness.

The man who has it is disinclined to those habits by which the comfort of many is spoiled. The means by which some seek satisfaction are so ill-adapted to the purpose that it would be as reasonable to seek rest between the rolling waves, or to seek ease by treading on coals of fire. However, he who has integrity of heart will not have the "sorrow, the woe, the contentions, the babblings, and the wounds without cause," which they suffer who are addicted to vicious pleasures.

In proportion also as his heart is made right, the passions which disturb the soul are subdued, and immoderate desires even for things lawful are partly stifled. Many when they are under the sway of these, "pierce themselves through with many sorrows." But how calm and composed the mind is when it is endued with genuine humility. How quiet and

serene it is in the midst of trials, if it is taught to exercise submission to God's will, and patience under provocations. How cheerful it is, even in adversity, when hope and faith are its governing principles.

He is happy because conscience exercises over him its legitimate control.

Much of our comfort in every circle depends on good government. Great are the disorder and discomfort of a family in the absence of proper authority. A whole kingdom is made unhappy when it is reduced to a state of anarchy. So also a soul in which conscience has lost its power, has no peace and enjoyment. It is overcome by every temptation, and, as a consequence, it is subject to grief and remorse. But, in the rectified soul, conscience is like the helm to the ship, by means of which it is so steered as to avoid dangerous rocks and terrible whirlpools, and is partly kept in the proper course, though exposed to contrary winds, and violent storms. A good conscience teaches us to avoid evil practices, and to keep in the path of duty when surrounded by various temptations. The result of this is inward peace, and genuine pleasure.

He is happy because he is conscious of having that within him which is truly worthy.

He is aware of many and great imperfections, yet he through all these can discern integrity, which is more valuable than the most precious jewels. Some minds are so constituted that order and neatness are to them an occasion of much pleasure. But there is no order like that of moral integrity, there is no beauty like that of holiness. And when any man can discern some lineaments of these in his heart, it affords to him a cause of real joy.

He is happy because he has the most glorious Being as the chief object of his thoughts and affections.

He is taught to know God in Christ. And he knows by experience that the just God is also a Saviour, and that he is ever faithful to those who hope and trust in Him. It is true that the goodness of God causes him to remember his own sins so as to be led to repentance, still he finds pleasure mixed with this kind of sorrow, and he experiences genuine happiness in humbling himself before God with feelings of contrition.

He often has sorrow from the various trials of life, yet he knows what it is to have his sorrows soothed by dealing with Him who is the God of all comfort.

Foresight of future events causes to him at times fear and anxiety, still these emotions are allayed by

confiding in that God, who is perfect in wisdom, almighty in power, and who continues the same for ever. And he finds that the more he dwells upon Him in devout meditations, the more is his mind ennobled, his heart expanded, and all his affections purified.

Hence, this disposition is like a congenial atmosphere, by breathing which we feel at ease, and are made lively and cheerful. How happy that man is in whose heart there is genuine humility. His soul is like a placid lake, fair and clear, and free from the foam and surging waves caused by the agitations of pride and selfishness. How agreeable to the individual himself, and how pleasant to others is the spirit of meekness ! It is like the fragrance of a sweet-smelling flower, affording delight to all in its vicinity. Even the tears of repentance are both wholesome and pleasant ; they are like the pearly drops of rain which we see sometimes dazzling in the sunshine. Love to our fellow-creatures delivers us from the poisonous bites of envy, malice, and revenge, and makes us feel pleasure in the exercise of pity, forgiveness, sympathy, and congratulation.

Love to God expands our hearts, purifies our minds from what is earthly and gross, elevates us from the reach of many noxious influences arising

from our earth; thus the soul, like a noble bird, ascends on high, and delights in expatiating freely in boundless space.



FOURTH SECTION.

What they are to do who are hitherto without a Right Disposition.

I. Some make the unnatural inference that since changing the heart is the work of God, they are not to act at all. But, it may be asked, for what purpose are we furnished with eyes and ears if these are not to be used, particularly in some way connected with our highest interest? Why are we endued with the powers of understanding and reflection if these capacities are not to be exercised in a matter that is to us most momentous? And though the work itself is supernatural, yet, since it is accomplished through moral means adapted to our natural powers, is it not presumption in us not to exercise those powers in using the appointed means? If a patient cannot cure a natural malady, does this imply that he has nothing whatever to do with a view to his recovery? Has he not still means at hand by which

he can entrust himself to the skill of a competent physician?

Some, though openly ungodly, would extenuate their own guilt because it is utterly beyond their power to change their hearts. Still, they would be very far from reasoning in the same manner with a view to justify the wicked conduct of one man towards another. Would it palliate the guilt of a man, should it be said he is so deceitful and dishonest that he cannot refrain from cheating and wronging his neighbour, whenever he has an opportunity? Would we look more favourably on a man, should an apology be made for him to the import, he is so cruelly disposed that he cannot resist the tendency to do violence to all around him? And does it lessen the guilt of a sinner if his aversion to God is so deeply-rooted that he cannot love Him, notwithstanding the manifestation He has made of the amiability of His character? Is it a plea in his favour if he has such a dislike to Divine truth that he cannot embrace it, even when it is presented to his notice with the highest amount of evidence? Is he less to be blamed because he is corrupt and perverse to such a degree that he has no heart to love and praise the Saviour, though he has been put under the most binding obligations? When any man

is, through some means, made comparatively serious, he, instead of justifying himself in a state of alienation from God, abounds in self-accusation. He is disposed no longer to plead his inability as an apology for himself, but, on the contrary, he freely acknowledges his own folly and presumption.

There are some also that justify their total inactivity, by stating that God's election has rendered all efforts on their part useless, since if He has determined to save them He will be sure to accomplish His purpose, and if He has not, that the case cannot be altered by any efforts of their own.

God has His purposes, but He has revealed to us our duty, and He has appointed means by which we are to secure desired results. His plan is like an immense chain, having one end fastened in His eternal counsel, and the other in the consummation of all things. Both are beyond the reach of our penetration, yet the middle part reaches us in promises, directions, and encouragements; and, by availing ourselves of these, we shall, in due time, be raised so as to perceive both ends. They who made the objection above, show its futility by their conduct in other matters. When they are engaged in an important concern in which their temporal interests are involved, they do not continue idle, saying that

the event is in God's hand, and that they, by their efforts, cannot alter His predeterminations; but, on the contrary, they exercise their judgment and skill, and use all means in their power, as if success depended entirely on their own exertions. And when they are in imminent danger, they do not content themselves by saying that they cannot change what has been decreed concerning them, but they rather avail themselves of all means within their reach, in order to secure their safety.

Some also take an occasion from instances of extraordinary conversions to infer that the change is always effected without any care or effort of man. We have an account, it is true, of persons converted even when everything in their own conduct was unfavourable to such an event. God in such instances displayed His sovereign grace and almighty power: still, they are not intended to be a rule of our duty. Though He is pleased at times to go out of His way by accomplishing His purposes in an unusual manner, yet He will not be pleased with us if we, on this account, shall neglect His plain directions and shall disobey His authoritative commands. Individuals, on different occasions, have by accident found a treasure in the field and elsewhere, yet we would greatly wrong ourselves, should we neglect

ordinary duties, and seek wealth in this extraordinary manner.

II. Now what is that man to do who is apprehensive that he is without a gracious disposition? Prudence dictates the propriety of his reflecting on his own character and condition. He may say to himself that there is a better state of heart to be obtained than that which he possesses, and that some others have elements of comfort to which he hitherto is a stranger. It was said in past years of the Negroes, in some of the slave states of America, that they had no idea there was a better mode of living in the whole world. It is also true of many who are in a worse bondage, in a moral sense, that they have no conception of the peace and consolation dwelling in a gracious heart. It is confessed that there are much hypocrisy and pretension in the world; yet, there is to be found what is real and genuine. Gold does exist, though we may often meet with alloy. Cecil relates of himself, that good impressions were made on his mind when a thoughtless youth, by noticing the conduct of his pious mother in her affliction; as observing her patience and serenity, he could not help thinking that she must have had some source of consolation, respecting which he was entirely ignorant.

Let him also consider that God can change his heart.

Whatever is implied in a holy state of mind, it can by Him be produced.

How many and how great soever may be the obstacles, yet with Him all things are possible. He is the Father of spirits; He is the author of all our natural instincts; and it is from Him that we received every power and capacity. And He who gave us a mind can give us a right mind. He who gave us existence can give us happiness. And our case is hopeful, if from a knowledge of our own helplessness, we are disposed to reflect on God's almighty power.

And even when we are greatly discouraged by the remembrance of past failures, and by the present prevalence of our moral malady, we make good use of this experience if we take occasion from it to cease from trusting in ourselves, and to increase our confidence in God.

Let him, moreover, consider that the exercise of God's power for accomplishing this purpose, is to be secured through the use of His appointed means.

We cannot naturally give existence to a single herb or plant, yet we are acquainted with means by which these in abundance may be produced. We cannot originate within ourselves a single property

belonging to a right heart, yet the words of Scripture are a seed; and when we avail ourselves of them, by giving them room in our thoughts and meditations, they may be vivified in our hearts by the quickening influence of the Holy Spirit.

When Jesus took upon Him the cure of the blind man, He did not accomplish this in a direct manner, but He made clay, and anointed his eyes with it. And he then said to him, "Go, wash in the Pool of Siloam." And after he went and washed, he came seeing. Appointed means are like the clay and the pool, and in the use of them we are to expect the desired blessing.

He who has a concern for this matter should also take care of making proper use of good impressions, and of favourable opportunities.

Sometimes the mind, through some means, is made more serious than usual: it is more inclined to reflection and devotional duties. A disposition of the kind is like a favourable gale, which, when it is properly used, turns out to be highly advantageous. We have every reason to believe that when we render obedience to what we know, we shall be led further in the path of duty; and that when we carry into practice present impressions, we shall experience others that are greater and deeper. "Turn you at

My reproof; behold, I will pour out My spirit unto you, I will make known My words unto you."

These suggestions imply the necessity of avoiding sinful habits, and all occasions tending to counteract good influences.

To addict one's self to vicious practices, especially after being under serious impressions, is the readiest means of hardening the heart and of incurring God's displeasure. We, in this connection, may see the propriety of what the Scripture says, "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord. He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination." It is clear, from these passages, that if we intend praying we must desist from sinning deliberately, or our prayer will be of no avail.

We are directed to "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling." Fear here is opposed to self-confidence. When we are conscious that a matter is beyond our own skill and power, we are then far from cherishing a spirit of assurance: we are "not high-minded, but we rather fear." The fear also signifies concern lest we should offend Him on whose good will the favourable issue of the affair entirely depends. "It is God that worketh in us to will and to do of His good pleasure." Hence,

fear is opposed to presumption. Under the influence of it we are induced to be on our guard, lest by our sins we shall cause God to withdraw from us every good influence, so as to leave us to the deceit, hardness, and perversity of our own hearts.

We are also taught to draw nigh to God; and for our encouragement we are told that He will draw nigh to us.

III. But, it may be asked, How can a man who is in his natural state take any step towards God, which implies a spiritual performance? It is, however, clear that we may be subject to secret and silent influences from God, though at the time we may not be aware that they are from Him. By means of such influences we are disposed to seriousness, and are inclined to secret prayer. And if these incipient desires are cherished by drawing nigh to God, we shall be encouraged by finding Him drawing nigh to us in more sensible impressions.

It is also clear that it is better to draw nigh to God as well as we can, than to be totally negligent of such a duty. And though we may make the attempt with merely natural qualifications, yet when we are thus engaged, God can make us spiritual, so as to alter the nature and character of our performance. Naaman was healed by complying with

the request of the Prophet, though at the beginning he was far from having a right state of heart.

We are often called to believe or to exercise faith, and we are as often told that faith is the gift of God. However, the call or command implies that we have to do with what tends to produce faith, or with the promises and testimonies of Scripture. Faith is a cordial belief of Divine truths. And when we revolve truths of the kind in our minds, we deal with the matter of faith, and God may be pleased to exercise upon us that gracious influence by which we shall believe them with the heart. We are also called to repent, and it is an explicit truth in Scripture that God gives us repentance. The message, however, implies that it is our duty to acquaint ourselves with what God says, concerning the evil of sin, to consider His solemn warnings and threatenings, and also to meditate on the powerful motives. He gives us to return to Himself. And, when we do so, we can cherish the hope that God will give us repentance unto life. When we are thus engaged, we are doing towards ourselves what ministers are directed to do towards others; and hence, we may humbly expect the same gracious result in our own case, as they are taught to expect as the fruit of their labour. "In meekness instructing those that oppose

themselves, if God, peradventure, will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth."

It is God that gives us a new heart, and yet we are enjoined to make a new heart for ourselves. From this, it is clear it is His will that we should have a serious concern about the matter, and that we should entrust to Him what is to us impossible.

CHAPTER III.

THE HAPPY MAN HAS HIS MIND AT REST RESPECTING THE
TRUTH OF THE CHRISTIAN REVELATION.

HE may be well acquainted with the objections made in the present age, and he may at times have been subject to several doubts and perplexities; still, it is a settled point in his mind that the Bible is the Word of God, and that the revelation it contains is eternally true. The subject leads us to make some inquiries.



FIRST SECTION.

*Some of the Causes of an Unsettled Mind respecting
the Scriptures.*

I. At present the minds of many are unsettled in consequence of apparent contradictions in Scripture to modern discoveries.

This, without a doubt, is one of the evil results accompanying the bold assertions which have recently been made. Many a youth, on reading some of the productions which have lately appeared, has been

disposed to question the correctness of his early impressions, and to cherish a notion that the Christian faith is not on a sure foundation. He finds this tendency strengthened when he considers that the books which he reads have been written by men eminent for learning, and that they also show much conscientiousness in their statements.

Many, also, that had scepticism lurking in their hearts, have been emboldened to disclose and to avow what they previously chose to conceal from reasons of modesty.

It is not intended here to enter upon a disquisition on the consistency of science and revelation. It is proper, however, to state that he greatly wrongs himself who embraces any sentiments that may be afloat, previously to his taking several things into his most serious consideration.

Let him consider that most of the modern objections are only such as were raised many times before, and that they have often been fully answered. They are old enemies, which long ago were slain and buried; but they are now and then raised and put in new garbs, so that, like spectres, they frighten the weak and the timid.

It is also to be observed, that to every objection arising from modern discoveries, some rational and

consistent answers can be suggested. It may be difficult to ascertain at once the true solution ; but, as sacred criticism advances, various difficulties will be in proportion unravelled. Hence the aspersions thrown at the Bible are like the calumnies with which a virtuous man is sometimes covered. However disadvantageous these may be to him for a while, yet in course of time they will be cleared away, the falsity of many assertions will be made apparent, and his integrity will be proved and established. Besides, if some meanings which have long been attached to certain portions of Scripture will be proved to be erroneous, this, by no means, will form an argument against the Bible itself ; it will be only a proof that some of its statements have been misunderstood. It is remarkable how many theories are adopted at different times to explain the appearance of the heavenly bodies ; yet these, on account of their inconsistency with fact, were one after another abandoned. However, the true system was at last discovered, and was generally embraced. Some previous views of inspiration may have been wrong, and the interpretation of certain parts may have been incorrect ; and if these must be laid aside, yet the grand system of Divine truth is invariable.

Admitting also the possibility of errors in chronology and in minor historical points, yet can these be of any weight when we consider the noble consistency of all its parts, the profound truths which it teaches, and the evident marks it bears of its being a gracious revelation adapted to the spiritual wants of man? We are told that a few spots are to be seen now and then on the face of the sun; yet, notwithstanding these, its splendour remains unequalled.

II. Others are unsettled on account of the contrariety of some Scripture accounts to their own notions respecting supernatural interference.

The Bible records events which are remarkable displays of God's power and goodness for peculiar purposes. The events are a deviation from the ordinary course of things. In other words, they are different from the effects produced by the regular operations of the laws of nature. They, therefore, who are disposed to deny supernatural interference, at times, on the behalf of man, must of necessity explain away or deny Scripture testimonies concerning miracles. Divine interposition is implied throughout the Bible. It is pervaded by this principle as thoroughly as all nature is influenced by the great law of gravitation and attraction. And as it would

be impossible to explain some natural processes without acknowledging the existence of that law, so the recorded events of Scripture cannot be received without implicit belief in Divine interposition. And why is there on the part of some so much unwillingness to admit this principle? Is it not to be ascribed to the godlessness of the human heart? "No God" was its voice as soon as it became sinful, and this sound has been echoed on different occasions throughout the various ages, and it is still repeated by many men, though they may possess the highest endowments, both natural and acquired.

III. Even learning, when it is not sanctified, may be an occasion of scepticism.

When a man has his natural powers improved without having his heart in the same proportion made holy, his disposition will become more and more at variance with the tenor or spirit of Scripture. He will have no taste for the grand though humiliating truths which it teaches, and he will be disposed to seek occasions for cavilling with its statements. Confidence in his own views and judgments will incline him to neglect the guidance of the book which claims to have Divine authority. Thus while he may have a genius to show skill in some natural sciences, yet, since he is without a

meek, humble, and spiritual mind, he will make the greatest blunders when exercising the same genius on what is spiritual and Divine. He will show greater inconsistencies than a thoroughly prosaic man would do when criticising the sublimities of poetry, or a man with a cataract on his eyes would when passing a judgment on the beauties of a painting. There are darkness and confusion belonging to the human mind, respecting things spiritual, which cannot be cured but through Divine renovation. Hence, when men, who have not been subject to this, pass their judgment on the Bible and its contents, they may show gross error and folly notwithstanding their genius and learning.

IV. Negligence of the Bible is, with regard to some, an occasion of readiness to receive any unfavourable impressions respecting its authority.

They may be great readers, yet they have never read the Scriptures systematically. They may have studied other branches of knowledge, but they have never studied the Book of God, and have never taken an interest in its contents. Hence, they are readily influenced by any disparaging notions that may be current in their time and country. They are like light articles which are easily agitated and carried away by every little gale ; or, they are like

loosened twigs, which are conveyed by the passing stream.

V. Some, also, have an aversion to the Bible on account of the inconsistency of their own character with the truths and duties it teaches.

They may have been taught from their childhood that the Bible is the Word of God. They may be acquainted with its doctrines, precepts, warnings, and admonitions. And they may have been at times subject to impressions from its truths. But as a consequence of neglecting their own hearts, and of yielding to several temptations, their conduct at present is a contradiction to the Scripture commands and to their early convictions. Still, they cannot divest themselves of fear and uneasiness. Some truth, precept, or threatening is now and then suggested to their minds. These condemn their practices, and they are caused to apprehend serious consequences. They, for this reason, have a secret wish that what causes to them disquietude should not be true. They are, hence, glad to meet with anything that tends to justify their sentiments and to strengthen their tendencies.

They are like a disloyal party who are ready to catch any calumnies against the ruling powers, and to embrace any occasion of throwing off the unpleasant yoke.

SECOND SECTION.

Why the Mind of a Christian is Settled with regard to the Truth of the Christian Revelation.

It may be said, at once, that this assurance does not consist only in a conviction arising from a thorough acquaintance with the various external arguments generally used in advocating the truth of Christianity. He may have derived some advantage by studying these arguments, and he may have found them useful on various occasions. But the conviction which is in his mind, is deeper than that which can be produced by mere external evidences: his stability is the result of leaning on a more sure foundation than can be furnished by any ordinary arguments.

I. It is the result, in the first place, of being enlightened by the Holy Spirit to perceive the harmony and excellency of Divine truths.

Every conscientious student of the Bible endeavours to obtain as thorough an acquaintance with its contents as his opportunities will allow. For this purpose he reads it with attention; he studies contemporary histories, which tends to confirm and illustrate its testimonies; and he avails himself of sacred

criticism, in order to arrive at the specific meaning of its respective passages; yet, if he is a Christian, he has a knowledge of Divine truths, which is superior to that which can be obtained through ordinary means.

Whatever may be the natural acquirements of any man, he, while unaided by a Divine influence, is as incapable to have a spiritual perception of Divine things as a child would be to comprehend the sayings of a sage, or a mere peasant would be to appreciate the measures of a profound politician. It is a familiar observation that two persons may be gazing at the same object, and yet owing to a difference in the peculiarities of their minds, some properties of the object may escape the notice of one, or may be regarded with much indifference, while the same properties may instantly arrest the attention of the other, and cause him to view them with absorbing interest. Divine light on Scripture truths effects in the mind a thorough conviction of the reality of the things revealed, and it is an occasion of perceiving a beauty in them which previously was not at all apparent. The same things may be studied by another man, yet, while he is left to the exercise of his mere natural powers, he acquires no firm persuasion of their truth, and he has no vivid notions

of their excellency. The latter is like a man looking at a beautiful landscape, having only the light of the moon. He sees a variety of objects at a distance, but he is not certain what they are, and their peculiar beauty is entirely concealed. But the former is like a man looking at the same landscape, having the light of the sun. It may be too extensive for him to view it all at once, and the distance of some objects may render them indistinct, yet the entire scene produces within him a conviction that he is not gazing at what is imaginary and illusive, and its beauty incites within him the most pleasing emotions. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God.....Neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned." "Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God."

II. In the next place, the truths of Christianity have engaged his heart, and this is another reason for the stability of his mind concerning them.

We mean by this, that these truths have been means of influencing most powerfully all the operations of his soul.

His will, by means of them, has received a new bent, or a new bias ; his affections are exercised

on new objects, and this is an occasion of imparting to him a most genuine enjoyment.

A mathematician may be fully convinced that the problems which he has been studying are immutable truths, yet he may find nothing in them to engage his heart, or to incite his affections. But the effects would be very different should he receive a letter from his best friend in the world, bearing his friend's own seal, and containing his well-known handwriting, and intimating that he himself is about to visit him, bringing with him as gifts the most valuable treasures. The seal, the handwriting, the familiar expressions of the friend, and also the good news conveyed, would not only convince him that the letter is true, but they would also incite within him a series of very pleasing emotions. Hence, not only his intellect, but also his whole heart, tells him that the letter is genuine; and for this reason, every part of it is dear to him, and he preserves it as one of his most valuable treasures. The Bible is, to a renewed man, similar to such a letter. It bears the impress of Divine authority; he finds on its pages unmistakable indications of God's love to man; and its peculiar expressions convince him that it has come from one who is thoroughly acquainted with man's heart, and that it reveals a pro-

vision which is in every respect adapted to man's wants; it, for this reason, creates within him the deepest interest, and he finds in his own bosom a response to its important testimonies.

III. Moreover, he experiences that the book makes him better and happier. Should a man hear many charges against his physician, to the import that his scientific knowledge is not in keeping with the age, that many of his notions have become antiquated, and that men entertained views too favourable respecting his genius and skill, yet he would be convinced that all the charges are groundless, should he know by experience that he can cure him of his maladies, yea, that he can do this after all others had failed.

Whatever others may say of the Bible, a Christian knows it is a book that improves his heart and makes him happy. He is conscious that in proportion as he imbibes its spirit, he becomes careful to avoid evil and injurious actions; he is disposed to be kind, courteous, and faithful in his conduct towards his fellow-men, and is constrained to lead a useful and honourable life. Franklin, of America, relates of himself, that he, on one occasion, by observing that his conduct had become more hard and harsh towards his servant-maid, was led to doubt

the correctness of the sceptical principles which he had entertained. On the contrary, a Christian, by observing the beneficial change made in the state of his heart and in his ordinary conduct, by the influence of the Bible, has a witness within himself for its truth.

THIRD SECTION.

The Difference between the Firmness of a Christian in his Religion, and that of others in their Religions.

It is a common observation, that the perseverance of a Christian in his religion, even so far as to die a martyr for it, is no evidence that what he believes is true, since many devotees to other religions are prepared at any time to do the same thing. It is hence proper to notice the difference between the two cases.

I. But it may, previously, be observed that there are some general truths which are common to all religions.* There is no religion that is totally destitute of any true principles; and there is no creed existing, however absurd it may appear, in which some important truths are not contained. The reli-

* Suggestions on the subject are given by Dr. Owen.

gions of the world resemble in this respect various countries in the same large continent ; these, though they may differ much from each other, yet have, as a whole, the same natural boundaries. When men's natural powers are in some degree cultivated, there are some general truths to which they will immediately give their assent, which also they will be induced in some way or other to practise. Some of these truths are the following : that there exists a God, and that He ought to be worshipped ; that the favour of God is absolutely necessary in order to make a man happy ; and that every man has various duties to perform towards his fellow-creatures. These notions may be interwoven with great errors, and the adherents to them may, in their practices, manifest gross absurdities, yet the principles themselves are general, and they cannot be easily eradicated. And when persons from their childhood are taught to venerate the religion in which these principles are contained ; when they see this veneration shown by their parents, relatives, and neighbours ; when they are told that this has been the religion of their ancestors in preceding ages ; and when the different rites and ceremonies belonging to it have become their constant practice, they will be disposed to cleave to it with peculiar tenacity, and they will be inclined

to make great sacrifices, rather than renouncing any part of that which they deem so venerable.

II. It is, moreover, to be observed that, in addition to these natural principles which are common to all religions, there belong to every false religion principles and practices which constitute its peculiarity.

The distinguishing points in every false religion, it is specially to be noticed, are such as are adapted and pleasing to human nature as depraved.

Some of them allow considerable indulgence in sinning, since they point out an easy and convenient means of rendering satisfaction. They also encourage deeds of self-denial and extraordinary penances, by representing that these are highly meritorious. Man is naturally proud and self-righteous, and when this principle is, through some means, powerfully acted upon, he may be disposed to perform extraordinary feats. Some of them promise also to their devotees a heaven consisting of everything that is pleasing to man's outward senses, and gratifying to his natural propensities; and as a result of such a representation some will not hesitate on certain occasions to lay down even their lives. Things of the kind characterize false religions. Men find in them abundance of what pleases their senses,

engages their imagination, gratifies their pride, and incites their curiosity. Their peculiarities are a soil in which the corrupt principles of man will take deep root, like thistles, which, though they are useless and prickly plants, yet are remarkable for the depth of their roots.

III. It is to be observed, in the next place, that the peculiar truths of the Christian religion are agreeable to the human mind only so far as it is spiritually renovated.

It has been already intimated that there are some truths in the Christian religion in common with other religions; but it also contains truths which are peculiar to itself. One of these is the truth concerning the assumption of man's nature by the Lord Jesus Christ. Another is the doctrine that the life and death of Christ are alone the meritorious cause of man's acceptance with God. And another is, that man must experience the work of the Holy Spirit in changing his heart, or in making him a new creature in order to be happy; and hence, that man's highest enjoyment consists in assimilation to God as a perfectly holy Being. But as long as any man is governed by his natural principles, these truths and others of the kind are not appreciated, and the motives arising from them, in order to in-

duce him to a holy life, are not at all agreeable. And it is often seen that mere professors, who have not experienced the power of the truth in their hearts, will not in a time of trial show attachment to their religion ; but, on the contrary, they will be disposed to embrace in preference other plausible doctrines which happen to be more in accordance with their natural principles.

The truths of the Christian religion have not much force to induce self-denial, unless they have been means of converting the heart, or unless the spirit of them is wrought in a man's disposition : the errors of false religions have a great influence on the human mind for the very reason that it is dark and depraved. Hence, a devotee to a false religion will not hesitate, on some occasions, to die for it as a proof of his zeal and fidelity ; while a mere professor of the Christian religion will not at all be disposed to make a similar sacrifice. A martyr for a false religion dies because he is under the influence of his native prejudices, and because he is impelled by motives influencing his corrupt heart ; but a true martyr for the Christian religion dies because he has been enlightened, convinced, and sanctified by God's Holy Spirit. Hence, there is an essential difference between the two martyrs.

And their actions, though the same in form, yet are totally different in character. One is the result of ignorance, the other is the result of knowledge and true conviction. One is a manifestation of the power of error in a depraved heart, the other is an evidence of the power of grace in a renewed heart.

Some that are genuine adherents to Christianity have been subject to a great change in their views and feelings. There was a time when they regarded it with indifference, and it may be that they had a decided aversion to its most important doctrines; and, perhaps, they were inclined to rank themselves with its opponents. But they experienced a great change. The change which has been effected in their sentiments and conduct is the result of a superior light shining into their understanding, and a thorough revolution in their moral feelings. Now, the more they are spiritually enlightened, the more beauty they perceive in Christianity, and the more firmly they adhere to its truths. In proportion as they are improved, or are made holy, in the same proportion are their convictions strengthened respecting the truth of Christianity. They are ready to receive light from any quarter, from science, history, and criticism, for they have an evidence

within themselves that they have grounded their hope on a sure foundation.



FOURTH SECTION.

The Happiness of the Man whose mind is settled concerning the Truth of Christianity.

I. He is relieved from the uneasiness connected with doubt or hesitation. The mind is unhappy when it is in a state of suspense even concerning ordinary matters, and how much more this is the case when it is subject to doubt respecting what is of the highest importance. And the more serious any individual is, the more is his anxiety, as long as his mind is unsettled. He feels like a man walking over a quagmire, who fears at every step, lest what appears to be a firm basis should be found to be a deep abyss. Or he is like a captain sailing in the midst of a thick fog, in a part of the sea abounding in reefs and rocks; and hence not knowing what instant he may be shipwrecked. But the man whose mind is settled takes to himself this consolation, that he is acquainted with some eternal truths in the midst of what is transient and vanishing.

II. He finds matter of adoration in the profound mysteries of Scripture.

As contemplating these, he has feelings analogous to those of an admirer of nature, who when beholding a scenery that is overpowering in sublimity, becomes conscious of his utter insignificance, and is absorbed in profound admiration. They who will not admit into their creed any truths but those which are palpable to their own reason, are like the ancient navigators who would not in their sea voyages lose sight of land, and hence, they were but little acquainted with the great wonders of the deep; but they who, from confidence in the truth of Scripture, believe its great mysteries, are like the modern navigators who launch boldly into the ocean, lose sight of all landmarks, and steer in their course over fathomless depths. Hence, they have a frame of mind similar to that of the Apostle Paul, when exclaiming, "O the depth of the riches, both of the knowledge and wisdom of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and His ways past finding out."

When Galileo, by means of his telescope, discovered the satellites of Jupiter, there was a little teacher in the same town who disbelieved the statements of the grave astronomer, and yet refused to look through his glasses; and thus, instead of partaking

with him of the wonder and delight connected with the great discovery, he made himself unhappy through a spirit of cavilling and moroseness. There are some that act in a similar manner with regard to the profound truths of Scripture. They are not disposed to receive its plain testimonies respecting what they cannot comprehend, and hence they deprive themselves of the happiness which others enjoy in believing and adoring its great mysteries.

III. He is ready to receive the consolation which the Scriptures are adapted to afford.

Having a conviction that the Bible is the Word of God, he makes God his best friend ; and he, with a childlike docility, listens to His suggestions. He regards the Bible as God's mouth, through which He makes known to us His will, and favours us with His fellowship. And he rejoices that by means of the Bible he finds a Friend who is always most faithful, and on whose testimonies he can rely with regard to his weightiest concerns. His patience may on some occasions be tried by his being caused to wait for the verification of some promises, and he may be led to acknowledge his own weakness and error in expecting things not really promised, or in a manner not indicated in the Scriptures ; still, this does not lessen his conviction respecting the

truth of the testimony; but he believes that though "the vision may tarry, yet that it will at last come."

It is not until we put this confidence in the Word of God that we are prepared to receive its consolation. When any one came to our Great Teacher for the mere purpose of cavilling, He would answer them according to their principles, and would not disclose to them the treasures of His wisdom and grace. But when any came to Him showing submission to His authority, and confidence in His goodness and truth, He would anticipate their wishes, forbear with their infirmities, and cause them to experience that He was in truth the Consolation of Israel. So, also, when men abounding in self-confidence, and having a perverse disposition, come to read the Bible, they may be left by that Spirit who dictated it to enjoy their own opinions, and they may find all the avenues of spiritual comfort entirely closed. But when a man with a humble and candid mind comes to read the same book, he may experience that his understanding is enlightened, his sorrows are soothed, and his many perplexities are unravelled. The Bible is to him like a beautiful oasis, in which the weary traveller finds delicious springs of water and luxuriant fruits, though he is surrounded by the dreary desert.

“That field of promise, how it flings abroad
Its odour over the Christian’s thorny road.”

Under the influence of its balmy truths many, though heavily burdened, advance over their rugged paths, having pure joy in their hearts, and sometimes sweet songs in their mouths. The Bible is a friend that points out to the ignorant and the erring the right direction. It lays hold of the hand of the weak and helpless, and affords to them strength and encouragement. It tells the fatherless and the bereaved that they have a Father in Heaven, who abounds in pity and compassion, and is never lacking in means for their defence and support. It whispers to the afflicted and distressed that God is a very present help in trouble, and it suggests to them what they are to do in their trying circumstances: “Call upon Me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me.”

They who are heartily attached to this book, experience that in proportion as their troubles and sorrows in the path of duty increase, their consolation derived from Divine promises also abounds. It was owing to this that Bunyan, when under a cruel persecution, said, that he was almost tempted to pray that his trials and sufferings might multiply, in order that he might have a larger measure of that peace and comfort which he then experienced.

CHAPTER IV.

THE HAPPY MAN REFERS HABITUALLY IN HIS MIND TO
GOD'S PROVIDENCE.

WHATEVER may be the variety of notions respecting this subject, a believer in Divine Providence finds it a truth having the most soothing tendencies. It is to him not merely a quiescent article, which he allows to have place in his creed, but it is a regulating principle which greatly influences his heart and his conduct. We shall, in our observations on the subject, proceed in the following order:—

FIRST SECTION.

A Definition and some Illustrations of Divine Providence.

I. We mean by Providence, the preservation and regulation of the world, according to God's pre-determined plan.

The comprehensive statement of Scripture concerning it is, that "God worketh all things according to the counsel of His own will" I was furnished

with a homely illustration, as conversing one day with a pious peasant on the road. The conversation began by mutual remarks on the precious rain which had lately been received; and he proceeded, by saying, "God is very good, and He shows that He controls the world. He is not like a railway maker, who constructs a line, and perhaps agrees to work it for a certain period, and when the time is up, he leaves it to take its chance. But God has made a world, and He keeps the management of it in His own hand for ever." What are ordinarily called laws of nature are in Scripture termed "ordinances of Heaven." They are God's established means of governing the world which He has created. And He can vary and modify the operations of these with incomparably greater ease than an engineer can regulate the movements of his own locomotive. Hence, to believe the possibility of a miracle, is only to acknowledge that God can so regulate the established order of things as to bring about extraordinary results. If we acknowledge the existence of an Almighty God ruling His own world, every difficulty in believing the possibility of a miracle immediately vanishes.

II. The position and circumstances of people in the world are to be ascribed to the arrangements

of Providence. Men follow their own inclinations, and consider their own advantages in the choice of their respective callings and different settlements, yet we are taught that they are, in their movements, under the control of a superintending Agent, "Who hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation." The different tribes of Israel received their respective inheritances in the land of Canaan, according to the determination of lots that were cast on the occasion. The decision appears to have been made in a most accidental manner, but when the whole affair was finished, it was found that some of them were settled according to the arrangement predicted by the Patriarch Jacob, some centuries previously. The event proved both that the good old man was Divinely directed in his utterances, and that the lots, when cast, were under Divine superintendence.

III. God exercises providence in securing His own end by means of many conflicting agencies. Though men may be governed by their own passions, and may obey their own impulses, and may use means to avoid certain ends, yet there are instances on record showing that sometimes their

passions, impulses, and deliberations are over-ruled to bring about the end which they intended to avoid. Joseph's brethren determined that his dream should never be verified in their yielding obeisance to him. They used means which, in their view, would be sure to prevent that result. But their subsequent history proved that their own plans were only means by which God accomplished His designs. "It was God," said Joseph to them, "that sent me here to save lives." The different hands on board of a ship are employed in a variety of occupations; the passengers walk backwards and forwards, passing and repassing each other; yet the captain, notwithstanding these various movements, steers the ship carrying them all so as to accomplish his own purpose. So also men are differently situated in the world; each aims at some private purpose or design; all are allowed to make their own choice and to exercise their own deliberations; still He, who is at the helm of all affairs and events, silently and steadily brings about His own grand design.

IV. Providence is exercised in the management of sin in the world. Though God was not pleased to interpose His power in the prevention of sin, yet its introduction into the world has been an occasion of making a fuller display of His character than

otherwise would have been made. His wisdom is manifested in its regulation, His justice is shown, in its punishment, and His mercy is displayed in pardoning transgressors. God shows wisdom in causing what is evil in itself to answer some good purposes. Sometimes one sin is made an occasion of correcting another. This is the case when a man through being allowed to fall into some notorious sin, is led to genuine repentance, just as a burn is sometimes cured by holding the part to the fire.

Sometimes the ambition and cruelty of one man are a means of promoting meekness and humility in another; just as the application of a leech is a means of extracting noxious matter from an unsound part of the body. And sometimes mischievous designs are overruled to bring about the most beneficial results. The malice, hatred, and cruelty of the Jews towards Jesus Christ were an occasion, through Divine wisdom, of promoting the salvation of the world.

V. There is much that is mysterious to us in the dispensations of Providence; but this is no wonder when we consider the narrowness of our capacities, and the comprehensiveness of the Divine plans. We, in this respect, as it has been aptly said, are like unskilful persons looking at the unconnected parts of an intended powerful machine. These are

brought, perhaps, from different quarters, and they may appear to the unskilful as ugly and useless articles. But when they are put together by the master engineer, they are found exactly to fit each other, and they easily co-operate to accomplish some noble object. The present affliction, trouble, and trying dispensation may be like isolated parts of a glorious plan which the great Designer has in His mind, and while we look at them separately they may appear to us mysterious; but when He shall have accomplished His purposes, it will be made manifest that all events, even those which appeared to us most perplexing, are necessary, as parts of His plan, and that they most harmoniously co-operate in bringing about the desired end. When Sir Isaac Newton found out the great law of attraction and gravitation, he was furnished with a satisfactory explanation of many things belonging to the solar system. Still, there was one point remaining which he could not at the time explain, and he put this down as an exception to the rule. But when he, afterwards, understood that law more thoroughly, he found that what he supposed at one time was an exception to the rule, was in reality a beautiful part in the great system. There are also some things in the system of Providence which we at present

cannot explain; and we are apt to regard them as an exception to the truth that "all things work together for good to them that love God." Nevertheless, when we shall be able to see and understand things better, we shall find that what we regarded as an exception, is a part in the glorious Divine dispensation.



SECOND SECTION.

God's Providence and Man's Duty.

The Providence of God and the duty of man are like what Ezekiel saw in a vision—"a wheel within a wheel." They are so arranged that the motion of one implies that of the other. Man's duty is a part of God's plan in accomplishing His purposes. Our own activity is a means of God's appointment by which He confers upon us both natural and spiritual blessings. And any indication that God is about to perform anything in His Providence ought to be a stimulation to us to be diligent in our duties. When a spring-tide is about to come in, the mariners in port become vigilant and active, and they prepare themselves to launch forth into the ocean. We find something similar to this

in the conduct of Daniel the prophet. When he understood by the books that the appointed seventy years of Israel's captivity were near the end; "I," said he, "set my face unto the Lord to seek by prayer and supplications." It might have been said, "Since God has promised to bring the people from their captivity, there is no need of being engaged in prayer and supplication." But the prophet made a contrary inference—"Since God is about to work, now is my time to pray and work." We are furnished with a similar illustration in reference to the great business of our salvation. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure." The admonition implies at least this plain meaning: "You are to work because God works." We are hence favoured with great encouragement to set about this important concern, for since God works in us and for us, we may in the prosecution of it expect a successful issue.

And in reference to ordinary favours, we are by various instances taught that the order of Providence is to impart blessings by means of the recipient's activity. The Psalmist, after specifying many of the irrational creatures, says, "These wait all upon thee that thou mayest give them their meat in due

season." And in what manner does He give them their meat? "That thou givest them they gather." God promised to prolong the life of Hezekiah, and to restore him to health; yet there was at the same time means appointed by which this was to be accomplished. "Let them take a lump of figs and lay it for a plaister upon the boil and he shall recover." The land of Canaan was promised as an inheritance to the people of Israel; still, they were to obtain possession of it through hard warfare with the old inhabitants. An angel appeared to Paul, while on that perilous voyage to Rome, telling him that no one in the vessel would perish; yet when some of the people intended to leap into a boat, Paul exclaimed, "Except these abide in the ship ye cannot be saved." Thus we see, in several instances, the connection between God's Providence and man's duty.



THIRD SECTION.

The Consolation which the Truth, respecting Providence, is adapted to afford.

I. A believer in Providence is delivered from immoderate anxiety in reference to doubtful or uncer-

tain affairs. While he is engaged in the various duties pertaining to his station, he endeavours to keep his mind calm by entrusting the result to Him who has all things under His control. When his mind is in a state of suspense with regard to any event, and when he is apt to be disturbed by anticipation of some difficulty, it would tend immediately to keep his mind serene, should he consider that while he is in the path of duty he has ground to believe that "the Lord will provide." He cherishes this soothing thought, that God has innumerable ways of providing for his wants, and of delivering him from his distresses. And though these may be, with regard to him, hidden or unknown, yet He is aware that his own understanding is not capable of discerning the means which may be always patent to Infinite Wisdom. Elijah obtained, in a time of drought, water from a cloud; but Elisha, in a time of similar distress, obtained water in a manner that was unknown to all men. These instances indicated that Providence is not restrained as to means of supplying our wants. A child that is favoured with kind parents troubles himself but little how he may be fed and clothed; but he confides implicitly in the care, ability, and affection of his parents. Similar repose is enjoyed by him who casts all his care on

his Heavenly Father, knowing that He cares for Him. He knows that the different seasons of the year will be such as He will arrange ; hence, he will not be too solicitous about the result,—whether his crops will be scanty or abundant, and whether they will be to him an occasion of adversity or prosperity.

He may, perhaps, be well aware that his own comfort depends much on the prosperous state of trade and commerce, yet, provided he guides his own affairs with discretion, he enjoys a degree of serenity by entrusting all concerns to Him who rules the world and all its affairs in perfect wisdom. He is surrounded, it may be, by a numerous and growing family, and, as thinking of their dependence upon him, he may sometimes be subject to anxiety lest his own health or his own energy should fail ; but it tends to restore his equanimity should he consider that “in Him we live, and move, and have our being ;” and that diseases, trials, and death are according to His regulation.

II. Moreover, the same truth is adapted to cherish within him contentment. Whatever may be his position in the world, whether it be prominent or obscure, influential or insignificant, he will consider that it is his lot according to the arrangement of the Supreme Ruler. He, hence, will deem it the

best in which he could be placed ; and his aim will be to discharge with composure the several duties belonging to his station. Whatever portion of temporal good things are in his possession, if he has no particular cause to charge himself with indiscretion and prodigality, he will regard it as the portion assigned to him by Him who knows best what is most conducive to promote his highest interests. And if he is favoured with wealth and honour, he will regard this as a treasure for which he is accountable, and as means entrusted to him to be useful in the world. And if he is tried with poverty, sickness, and various unpleasant events, since he believes that his times are in God's hands, and that nothing befalls him but according to His wise counsel, he, with a spirit of genuine submission, will say, "The cup which the Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"

III. The same truth is also fitted to inspire him with fortitude to meet the various vicissitudes of life. The accidents to which we are exposed are innumerable. When we go on a journey the horse may stumble, or the carriage may be overturned, or we may suffer violent attacks. When we are at home, at our ease, the elements of some latent malady may creep within our habitation, and may

suddenly lay us prostrate; or thieves and robbers may cause us to suffer loss and injury. The wind may rifle our dwelling, or it may be shattered by thunderbolts. Water may overflow the fields and sweep away the produce with which they are covered. Fire may consume much valuable property. The creatures may be taken away by murrain, and the children may be slain by war or pestilence. The consciousness that we are subject to so many vicissitudes, tends to throw us into a state of constant fear and agitation. Yet there is one truth which has a counteracting tendency, "The Lord reigneth
"A sparrow shall not fall on the ground without your Father;" "The hairs of your head are all numbered." This is fitted to make us firm and resolute in the path of duty, knowing that nothing shall befall us but what is permitted for some wise reasons by our Heavenly Father.

IV. The same truth tends to make us exercise patience under ill-treatment. It is often the case that the worthy suffer from the malice, calumny, and cruelty of the ill-disposed. And when they who suffer consider merely the injustice of the treatment, they may be subject to angry and avenging emotions; but when they consider that such a treatment may be only a scourge appointed, perhaps, for the pur-

pose of chastisement and correction, they acknowledge God's hand in it, and endure the trial with submission. It was a sentiment of this kind that induced David to say when he was cursed and pelted by Shimei, "Let him alone, for the Lord hath bidden him."

V. This truth will also cherish within us hope even in desperate circumstances. A history of providential dealings towards some would be a history of wonders. It may not contain an account of miracles, but it would imply many things that are adapted to strengthen faith and to sustain hope. Some have often been led to circumstances which caused them to feel their utter helplessness, and then it pleased God to display His power and faithfulness in causing for them deliverance.

"There, while a solemn stillness reigns around,
Faith, love, and hope within my soul abound ;
And while the world suppose me lost in care,
The joys of angels unperceived I share."

The fable of the ivy in the dungeon is applicable to many cases. This, through some accident, had sunk into a low, dark, and isolated position. But even here it was now and then visited with a few sunny rays. By means of these it was preserved, renewed, and strengthened. It gradually grew up,

it ascended higher and higher, and, ultimately, it waved at the top of the dungeon as if sporting in the sunshine. There are some who, in consequence of several unfortunate events, have found themselves in a low state, but the truth under notice implies many enlivening and cheering rays of hope. By means of these they may be renewed and strengthened, and though their days at present may be days of gloom and darkness, yet they may again have many days of joy and prosperity.

VI. This truth also may dispose us to acquiesce in the will of God when we are visited with what is trying and mysterious. Many of the trials to which we are at present subject, may appear to our reason inexplicable. But when we consider that these are under the control of Him who is perfect in wisdom and unerring in His counsel, we may enjoy the comfort that these will hereafter be made plain. It is seen sometimes that a man who is engaged in important concerns does some things which ordinary observers cannot at the time understand, but when an opportunity is afforded him to show his reasons, all see the propriety of his conduct, and acknowledge the wisdom of his management. There are some providential dealings to which the saying of our Lord Jesus may be applied,

“What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.”

VII. Finally, the same truth is adapted to cherish within us gratitude and adoration. When we have a consciousness that we are, at all times, objects of Divine superintendence, that secondary causes are but hands, by means of which the Great Benefactor bestows upon us His blessings and favours, if there is any degree of devotion in our minds we are disposed, with pleasing emotions, to acknowledge our dependence upon Him, and we experience expansion of heart in rendering to Him thanksgiving and praise. The extent of his dominion, the grandeur of His actions, and the sovereignty displayed in some of His proceedings, may elevate our thoughts even to sublimity. And while having these sentiments, we may be disposed to adore Him in a strain similar to that used by the poet, when he said of God—

“Who sees with equal eye as God of all,
A hero perish, or a sparrow fall ;
Atoms or systems into ruin hurled,
And now a bubble burst, and now a world.”

CHAPTER V.

THE HAPPY MAN ENDEAVOURS, ACCORDING TO HIS OPPORTUNITIES, TO ACQUIRE KNOWLEDGE AND MENTAL IMPROVEMENT.

It is a remarkable fact that the Gospel tends immediately to rouse men from their mental dormancy, and to stimulate them to the exercise of their intellectual powers. As soon as people, who had been in a state of barbarism, embrace Christianity, they appear to be animated with new life, and to be incited by new impulses. The result of this is, that arts and sciences are studied with great ardour, and much progress is made towards civilization. And the same tendency has been seen in many instances of isolated conversions among ourselves. Whenever any man experiences the saving influence of Gospel truths in his heart, should he have been previously in a state of ignorance, an immediate indication of the happy change will be much dissatisfaction with himself, and a strong desire for acquiring useful knowledge and information. He, consequently, will be disposed to exercise much

diligence, and to make many little sacrifices for the purpose of improving his mind. And this habit tends for several reasons to promote his happiness.



FIRST SECTION.

The Pursuit of Knowledge is Pleasant, for it is a Means of Developing the Powers of the Mind.

I. We know from experience that there is pleasure connected with every process which brings into exercise any natural endowments. A parent has had opportunities of observing the satisfaction shown by his child when he is able to make any new movement, or when he finds himself capable of making a new use of his little limbs. And the child, by various innocent frolics, shows the abundance of his delight in his newly acquired exploits. Even the lambs on the field appear to be overjoyed when exercising their limbs in running, frisking, and in performing a variety of lively gambols at their pleasure. And the birds in the air seem often to fly about for the mere pleasure of plying their wings. There is an analogous delight connected with the judicious exercise of our mental powers. When these are employed in reading,

searching, reasoning, or poetizing, there is a liveliness imparted to them not unlike that of a blazing fire in a domestic hearth on a wintry evening. And there is a cheerfulness experienced, in consequence of this activity, similar to the glee shown by a youth, who, through playing, has gained his heat notwithstanding the intense cold of the surrounding ice and snow. The pleasure connected with some of the games that are much in vogue, seem to be derived almost entirely from the fact, that they bring into exercise some powers of the mind. Still, these cannot but be reprehensible, since they are an occasion of wasting time without promoting any good result. But, when the mind is exercised in studying history, in solving a problem, or in making experiments in natural philosophy, its powers are expanded, and the effects experienced are truly pleasing.

II. Most people are aware of the great difference in their feelings, according as their minds are exercised or neglected. Some, that have not trained themselves in making mental acquisitions, experience inanity, torpor, and depression, as soon as there is a cessation of their ordinary or secular pursuits, which called for their skill and energy. A gloom and deadliness creep over them, similar to that which is sometimes experienced through breathing in

an unwholesome atmosphere. On the other hand, when a man rightly uses his leisure time in improving his mind, the activity itself tends to exhilarate his spirits; and, on reflection, he has the additional satisfaction of finding that he has made some progress, or that he has added something to his store of knowledge.



SECOND SECTION.

The Acquisition of Knowledge is satisfactory, since it furnishes the Mind with ascertained Truths.

I. It is true that in proportion as a man advances in knowledge he sees more and more of his ignorance, and he perceives that concerning a large number of subjects we can only form conjectures. He is also well aware, in reference to subjects with which he is best acquainted, that his knowledge of them is very imperfect, and hence, that he has the truth but in part. It is also well known that though many have means of knowledge, yet that their notions are very confused, or that some truths in their minds are mixed with much error. This is the case when a man has been hasty and superficial in the pursuit

of knowledge. Such a man may have glanced at a variety of objects, he may have passed rapidly from one subject to another; however, the impressions made on his mind are not clear and abiding. His notions concerning many of the subjects which came under his notice are as indistinct as would be his notions concerning individual trees after having passed only once through a large forest.

Some, also, deprive themselves of truth by making premature conclusions. It is generally the case, that those who take only a few facts into consideration are very soon able to come to a decision; but when other facts are disclosed, their former decisions, it may be, are proved to be wrong, and hence they are left in doubt and perplexity.

And there are others that fall into error because their predilections influence their judgment. Their previous training may have given them a wrong tendency; or they may have immoderate veneration for some great name as an authority in matters of judgment; or interest and pleasure may have biased their mind to a certain direction. Through occasions of the kind, their minds may be influenced so as not to perceive aright the truth, just as a man could not see distinctly after having gazed for a while on a specific vivid colour. We come to

know the truth of some things by a kind of intuition. The certainty in the mind is similar to the assurance which we have at the end of a fine problem that we have the true solution.

And it is not a little satisfactory to a man, that he, on many occasions, is acquainted with the means by which different truths have been ascertained.

II. Now, the possession of truth is conducive to our happiness. It gives ease to the mind in consciousness of having something stable and reliable. We can easily imagine how glad a man would be when passing over an extensive quagmire, should he know of a few safe stepping-stones. And we know how satisfactory it would be to wandering and erring travellers should they, by chance, have a glance at those steady objects in the sky, by means of which they are directed in their course. So, also, it is consolatory in a world which abounds so much in ignorance and error, to be furnished with some truths for our direction.

It is truth that will enable us to show wisdom in our choice on different occasions. It is truth that will help us to avoid blunders, and to show skill in our ordinary callings. It is Divine truth that will allay the moral perplexities of our minds,

and will guide us to make a safe transit from time to eternity.

The possession of truth also renders the mind superior to many noxious influences. Truth places us, in a manner, on an elevation from which we can, in one direction, see the windings and mazes below, in which many endlessly wander; and, in another direction, the thick fog in which a large number are enveloped.

A man who has truth sees at once the folly of many silly notions, and the inconsistency of many strange theories. He sees the vanity of various floating rumours and traditions, and he feels himself elevated above many of the unnecessary fears and alarms which are the result of ignorance and superstition.

Moreover, the possession of truth refines and ennobles the mind. It has been said that all truth is Divine; but that, like the sun, its rays assume different colours, according to the diversity of objects on which they fall. The more, then, we deal with truth, the more we deal with what is Divine, and it will be our own fault if we shall not, through it, be elevated and adorned.

THIRD SECTION.

The Increase of Knowledge is pleasant, for it multiplies the incidental Occasions of Enjoyment.

I. A man will have matter for reflection when left alone.

Through knowledge a man becomes a good companion to himself. Suppose a man left by himself in some position in which he has no particular duty to perform, or in which there are but few or no external objects to draw his attention; yet should he have a book to read, or should his mind have been well furnished through previous reading, he will experience no lack of matter for his intellectual entertainment. Or, suppose him on a journey, or engaged in some occupation that requires chiefly the exercise of limb and muscle, he would find the tediousness of his employment much lessened should he be able to turn his thoughts to some subject connected with science, divinity, or general literature.

II. Man's natural curiosity is gratified. We have a natural curiosity, which is partly gratified by the acquisition of knowledge. A child is delighted when listening to interesting tales, and his attention

is preserved by the narration of strange events and wonderful adventures. And we have the same disposition in every period of our life; the relation of what is new, ingenious, and marvellous affords to us pleasure. And, by becoming a little acquainted with general literature, we are furnished with abundance of what is suitable to this desire. We have, convenient to us, the remarkable events of history, the marvels of science, and the wonderful incidents of travel and adventure.

And, as a consequence of availing ourselves of these means, we begin to look with greater interest at all surrounding objects; herbs and trees engage our attention; rocks and hills furnish us with interesting matter; rivers, gulfs, and seas present us with marvels; animals of different kinds display before us wonderful curiosities, and the innumerable host of the heavenly bodies exhibit to us scenes of grandeur and sublimity. And with this preparation it is pleasing that we can better appreciate what is brought under notice on different occasions.

III. The company of the intelligent becomes to him more interesting. When we happen to fall into intelligent circles, we shall feel a lively interest in the topics of conversation; and when at other times certain subjects are formally treated, we shall

have the satisfaction of comprehending partly the principles and their illustrations. Moreover, should we have been wise and thrifty enough to furnish ourselves with a little library, we can then in our leisure hours choose our companions. We can sit down and listen to the narrations of some graphic historian; or we may be amused by receiving the statements of an eminent natural philosopher; or when we wish to change the subject, we can turn to the disquisitions of some judicious mental philosopher; or to the treatises of a profound divine.

FOURTH SECTION.

The Possession of Knowledge is delightful, since it increases our Power for Usefulness.

I. Through knowledge we acquire power in some degree over matter and mind. All the different arts are but knowledge reduced into practice, and they are so many instances of man's power over matter. And the benefits caused to society through improvements in the arts are incalculable. Through these the drudgery of labour has been lessened; travelling has been rendered easy and expeditious; the conveyance of intelligence is effected

with the greatest speed ; means for alleviating pain have been discovered ; and the soil has been rendered universally more productive. And it is well known that these improvements have not been made by one class of men only ; but that they are facts in which the skill and intelligence of all grades are shown. Hence, each man, by improving his own mind, acquires a capability of promoting in various ways personal and social advantages. And it is a matter of daily experience that it is an occasion of some little pleasure to an individual, should he be able to tell his neighbour how his pain may be alleviated, or how he may perform some difficult task with greater ease, or through what means certain dangers may be lessened, or how his enterprise would be likely to be successful.

And knowledge is not less beneficial as to the power it gives over mind. Every man of a benevolent disposition wishes not only to do good to his fellow-creatures, but to do it also in the best manner. However, it has often happened that some good endeavours have miscarried because they, from ignorance, were made in a wrong way. Knowledge gives weight to the parental counsel ; it is an occasion of skill and tact in the friendly admonition, it tends to secure success to benevolent movements, by

making the projectors acquainted with the right principles. Hence, knowledge is necessary to teach and govern a family, it is requisite to direct and move an audience, and it is indispensable to govern and improve a community.



FIFTH SECTION.

Knowledge tends to our Happiness, for it is an Occasion of cherishing devout Affections.

I. Science introduces us to the works of God. When we read history, whether general, or particular, or individual, we are furnished with many instances which are clear indications of His hand or of His special interference. And even when we read the general news of the day, there are some events recorded, respecting which it can be said, "This is the finger of God." When, again, we contemplate the works of nature, the adaptation of one part to another, and the beautiful uniformity shown in the midst of such a vast complexity, are fitted to inspire within us adoration of the wisdom and power of Him, who is the Maker and Ruler of the grand machinery. No less evident are the proofs of benevolence, notwithstanding the con-

fusion introduced into our world by the sin of man. Moreover, the unbounded extent of nature, the magnitude and multiplicity of the heavenly bodies, teach us the omnipotence and infinity of the Creator. Men, it is true, may become acquainted with the general facts of science, and continue like statues as to any moral or devout affections. But as we would say that he is deaf who would not be moved by the sweetest music, and that he is blind who would not be charmed by the loveliest scenery, so we can say with Young, that "an un-devout astronomer is mad." But to a man who has a right state of heart, the wisdom, goodness, and majesty displayed in the works of nature, are an occasion of devotion, just as a beautiful flower yields its fragrance when receiving the benign rays of a morning sun. And we need not say that all devout affections tend to make us feel happy. How tranquilizing that genuine humility is, which is produced by a sense of God's greatness and majesty. How elevating, expanding, and purifying to the mind, is a true spirit of praise and adoration. When emotions of the kind are produced within us, our condition is analogous to that of a man who is transposed to a most delightful climate, where every gale is congenial to his feelings, or is elevated in

safety to a region of ease and calmness far above all alarming storms and disquieting agitations.

II. It is true that without a change of heart, a bad use may be made of all the various branches of knowledge. This is proved by the occasional instances of crimes perpetrated by men after having enjoyed all ordinary intellectual advantages. The sunny rays which enliven and beautify all nature, render adders and serpents more fierce and poisonous, so also the rays of knowledge, which in themselves are so pleasing, are occasions of inciting the malevolent powers of the depraved. The eye may be mechanically adapted to seeing, yet without the principle of life there would be no vision: in like manner a man may have the eye of general knowledge, but without a Divine life in his soul, he would be destitute of devout affections.

CHAPTER VI.

THE HAPPY MAN AVAILS HIMSELF OF VARIOUS SUBSIDIARY
MEANS OF HAPPINESS.

As a wall is not strong and compact without many filling stones; as a language is not complete without many particles; and as several of the planets have their satellites, so there are various subsidiary means that are conducive to promote our happiness. Some of these are the following:—

FIRST SECTION.

Proper Occasions for exercising the Social Affections.

Man is a sociable creature. His desire for society is deep and strong. It is also very early shown in the choice of playmates, and in the formation of many little connections. And the strength of it is proved sometimes in prolonged attachments.

I. And when, in some circumstances, the exercise of these affections is prevented, this becomes an occasion of gloom and other unpleasant feel-

ings, which are like miasmata that arise sometimes from a stagnant pool. The result also of this deficiency is, in some cases, a stiffness of manners and a shyness of disposition, which at times cause uneasiness and inconvenience, just as a limb causes pain on being moved after being held for some time in the same position. And whatever native excellencies a man may possess, they, in this case, are much concealed, and he becomes, with regard to society, like a tree stripped of its foliage.

II. On the other hand, a proper exercise of the social affections tends to promote a healthy and lively tone of mind, just as the constant purling of a little rill tends to keep it pure and clear. It promotes also a man's usefulness, for intelligence and moral suggestions are elicited in society, like electric sparks from a machine in operation. Hence it is clear, that "it is not good that man should be alone." The Creator Himself, who perfectly understands the nature of His creature, has uttered this testimony. The truth of it is also proved by multiplied instances, derived from daily experience. Hence, an isolated life, except in rare cases, is a misfortune only to be endured, and not a condition to be voluntarily chosen. The cares connected with a family are sometimes var-

ious and pressing; still they are, generally, by far more than counterbalanced, since a wife, children, and domestics afford the pleasantest opportunities for exercising the social affections. We are, moreover, furnished with some intimations even from analogy: herbs and plants seem to grow better in combination. And some of them, by their ramifying tendrils, indicate that they have a natural tendency to seek fellow-support and fellow-nurture. Birds have their mates, and fly in groups, and they, by endless little movements, show how much they enjoy the companionship. It is a common observation, that those who have settled in life, and are surrounded with families, proceed in their career through the world with greater cheerfulness than those do who, from choice or accident, continue to be single members of society. When providential arrangements do not appear favourable to form those connections which are agreeable to nature, and helpful to grace, a godly man will prepare himself to encounter singly his difficulties, relying on Divine promises, and deriving comfort from the great Fountain of consolation. On the other hand, an isolated life, when this depends on a man's own choice, is an unnecessary self-denial, and it implies an incompleteness of experience and character. A

man may singly row the little boat of his concerns on the river of the present life, but, by having a counter-rower, he proceeds more easily and more cheerfully in his voyage.



SECOND SECTION.

A just Estimation of the Imperfection of our Present State.

I. We live in a world of imperfections. Every object has its defects, and every performance has its faults; friends have their failings, duties have their difficulties, promotions have their crosses, and pleasures are mingled with some bitterness. When we stand on an elevated position, viewing an extensive landscape, we are disposed to think that the whole of what we see is an even plain. Still, when we come down and begin to travel over it in different directions, we find that it abounds in small irregular eminences. So also, how flattering soever some objects, events, and circumstances may appear to us at a distance, it is seldom that they in reality correspond entirely with our previous notions. Hence, he who proceeds in his career through the world without having,

previously, considered duly the imperfection of human nature, and the deficiencies belonging to every excellency, would be like a heedless traveller, who often dashes his foot against something which causes him to stumble and fall. But he who has made this estimation is like a man who anticipates unsettled weather, and has consequently prepared himself for rain and storm, should these happen to be his lot.

II. Men are led into different states of mind according as they make or neglect this calculation. He who has neglected it will meet with constant disappointments, and hence he will show signs of peevishness and discontent. He will be like a man who has weak eyes, and who is consequently pained by every little change in the degree of light, and in the state of the atmosphere. But he who has made this estimation will be able to show considerable equanimity. His acquisitions and enjoyments will often exceed his expectations, and he will hence have in his heart contentment and gratitude. He will be like a mariner, who, being aware of the hardships which may be met with at sea, is thankful on account of the comparative fewness of the serious and alarming events of his voyage.

THIRD SECTION.

Order and Timeliness in the Discharge of our various Duties.

Consciousness that something has been neglected which ought to have been performed, is a source of uneasiness. And it is often the case that many duties crowd at the same time upon the man who is of dilatory tendencies. The result is that his mind is agitated, and he is forced to leave some things undone, and to perform other things in a very unsatisfactory manner. Let us picture to ourselves a man who from indolence, or carelessness, has fallen into dilatory habits. He is some day aware, we may suppose, that he has something of importance to perform, yet that there is no imperative necessity for it to be done immediately, and hence he puts it off until some other day. The following day he understands that there is another business to be transacted, but that it is not urgent at present, and this again is postponed until he shall feel better disposed. On the third day, again he finds that there are some matters which ought to be arranged, but as he does not wish them to interfere with his present ease and amusement, he

promises himself to attend to them at a more convenient season. But some day, when he is as drowsy as ever, he, by a series of communications, is led to understand that the first duty must be discharged without delay, or that he will be subject to a serious loss or damage; that the second business cannot be postponed any longer without injuring his reputation; and that unless he will pay instant attention to the third affair, he will be in danger of being dismissed from his place, or of losing his position. Now, he is full of hurry; knows not what to do first; he has no proper control over himself; he applies to some of his duties, but what he does is very imperfect, and hence very discreditable to himself, and he tries to shield himself by making many vague and unfair apologies. He is like a man who has been strolling about for pleasure from home; the threatening clouds tell him that he ought not to go far, yet on account of the genial warmth and intervening sunny beams, he flatters himself that he can delay his return with impunity. But at last unmistakable signs of a storm appear; he is alarmed; he starts homeward; he hears the peals of thunder; he feels the beats of the rain or the hail; he chides himself for having stayed so long; he quickens his pace, and he reaches his

home breathless, bearing upon him marks of the storm outside.

The man who is beforehand with his duties saves this hurry and confusion. He may hear a dila-
tory friend suggesting that order and punctuality are hardly compatible with true greatness; but this appears to him just the same thing as if it had been said that a captain, who pays attention in due time to a leak in his ship, is not magnanimous, though he by his care saves himself and the crew from drowning.

He who observes order and timeliness performs the most work with the least hurry and uneasiness. He imitates the heavenly bodies, which proceed in their orbits with regularity, and they with perfect ease and stillness perform their revolutions.



FOURTH SECTION.

Activity in Promoting the Welfare of others.

I. It is a wise arrangement of Providence, that when we endeavour to do good to our fellow-creatures, we promote our own happiness. God Himself is happy in imparting His fulness to His creatures, or in bestowing upon us His blessings.

And the more we become under the influence of love or charity, the more will our conduct resemble the Divine character. As the fine diamond reflects the sun in the sky, so love and benevolence are in some degree an image of God in the heart. He has delivered to us the injunction, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." And He has connected the most genuine pleasure with this command when it is reduced to practice.

II. Activity in doing good is in itself pleasant. When a man aims only at self-interest, or self-satisfaction, the state of his mind is servile, his views are contracted, and there is something unwholesome in his entire disposition. He is like a man confined to a narrow chamber, and forced to breathe again and again the same air; the consequence is, that his constitution is disordered, and he becomes subject to gloom and deadliness. But he who is engaged in promoting the common welfare, is like a man breathing the free air, the constant fresh supply of oxygen which he receives invigorates his system, and he is rendered lively and buoyant.

III. The recollection also of benevolent actions is pleasant. There are some actions which afterwards cause remorse and chagrin; hence, whenever

they are remembered by the perpetrator of them he is rendered unhappy. They are like open wounds, which whenever they are touched cause smarting pain. Though many a man has received pardon from his God of some unkind and cruel deeds, yet the remembrance of them is ever an occasion of unhappy feelings. But how different is the case with the man who devotes his life to benefiting his fellow-creatures? He has learned to discard all deeds as meritorious in the sight of God, still, so far as they proceed from a rectified heart, and are approved by a good conscience, the recollection of them is to him like a sweet fragrance from an enclosed field on a summer morning.

Should even good men endeavour to drive away gloom by means of exciting scenes and innocent amusements, they would find that the attempt is like an endeavour to get warm by standing before an insufficient and one-sided fire; some parts continue chilly, and themselves feel uncomfortable. But when they devote themselves to a life of usefulness, they experience inward satisfaction like the genial warmth which is obtained through proper exercise.

CHAPTER VII.

THE HAPPY MAN ENDEAVOURS TO ADJUST THINGS IN HIS PRACTICE ACCORDING TO THEIR DUE PROPORTIONS.

THE most pleasing character is that in which there does not appear any particular excess or any observed deficiency. When this is the case, the different qualities which constitute true excellency are nicely balanced, and they appear in beautiful combination. A character of this kind is like a fine tree, in which the stem and branches are so conformed as to make a truly attractive appearance; or it is like an ingenious piece of mechanism in which all the parts are so skilfully adjusted as to produce a most effective co-operation.

We shall point out a few instances of the harmony which we have in view.



FIRST SECTION.

Activity in Duties combined with Adequate Repose and Recreation.

There are some that are so situated as to have abundant leisure. Their time is in a great degree

at their own disposal. As to any urgent call that is upon them, they can indulge themselves in sleep, in amusement, or in travelling, according to their own inclinations. But this exemption from active duties is not a means of promoting happiness.

It is well known that many of those who are placed in these circumstances indicate uneasiness, irresolution, and habitual gloom. This, in particular, is the case with those who prematurely arrive at this quietude after some years of earnest industry. They are apt to experience languor and melancholy. Hence, as stagnant water cannot be wholesome, so the inactive man, if he has health and strength, cannot be happy.

On the other hand, it is hardly necessary to say that a man's happiness is much lessened should his cares and his labours be excessive. There are some that voluntarily subject themselves to constant toil and harass. They, from motives of ambition, form extensive projects; they disturb their own minds by creating cares, and they tax their utmost energies in carrying out their contemplated schemes. And, in many cases, there is but little benefit secured to themselves and the public, though their rest and comfort are sacrificed. Hence, one of the most effective means of preventing this damage to their

personal peace would be to contract their views and to limit their exertions; just as mariners in adverse winds save themselves from shipwreck by lowering the sails.

But there are others who, from necessity on their part, have their powers, both mental and muscular, taxed to the utmost. They are in habitual bondage. They feel that their continuance in the world is not life but existence. In the discharge of their hard but monotonous duties, they experience that their motions have become nearly as mechanical as those of the machines which they manage. Several classes are subjected to this excessive toil. And those eminent individuals who through their strenuous efforts, gradually, produce ameliorating changes in the arrangements of society, are to be deemed noble benefactors of humanity; and they prepare for themselves a crown of honour and glory.

The duties of some are such as call, chiefly, for the exercise of the head and the heart in study and devotion. And those of this class who truly care for their own comfort and lasting usefulness, endeavour to combine with their immediate duties some muscular employments, or recreations, which directly tend to promote their health, and to invigorate their minds. Even birds which are capable of the highest

flight, and shew the greatest agility in the use of their wings, find it often necessary to alight on some earthly objects, and to be for a time among terrestrial companions. And like them, the man of the most elevated genius who can soar into high regions of thought and imagination, if he truly cares for his well-being, will often consider that he is composed of something besides mind or spirit, and that he must descend now and then to join in earthly enjoyments and avocations.

We, in our present state, are not capable of continuing long in duties of pure devotion. And the spirit of it is often preserved and promoted by means of other congenial pursuits, but less ethereal in their nature. The Great Author of our being has shewn his wisdom in proportioning the elements of which the atmosphere is composed. The oxygen contained in it, which supports our life and energy, is alone too volatile and inflammable for our comfort and prolonged existence, hence it is diluted by means of other elements that are less exciting. A fervent spirit of devotion is so pure and spiritual that we are not capable of it in a large degree but in combination with much that is earthly and natural. Hence, the first man, during the period of his perfect happiness, joined in beautiful proportions the spiritual

duties of close communion with God with the earthly pursuit of keeping and trimming paradise.

The eminent Edward Payson, when writing once to a friend, complained much of his trouble and toil in removing from one house to another. He, ordinarily, was so much engaged in intense study and devotion, that he considerably neglected the means which tended to promote his health and energy. But the exercise in removing acted so beneficially upon him, that his biographer said it would have been a great blessing to him had he been under the necessity of removing every month.



SECOND SECTION.

Gentleness joined with Aptness for Resistance.

It is highly pleasing to view a character endued with much native meekness and candour.

These qualities, and others similar to them, are like so many favourite plants springing spontaneously from particular portions of the ground. As the latter indicate a rich and fruitful soil, so the former are a sign of much native amiability. But there are some that were naturally stern and rugged, yet they have acquired a good degree of true gentleness as the result of much care and discipline.

They now in contrast with what they formerly were, or with others that have neglected themselves, are like a fine fruit-bearing tree compared with a wild tree of the same species which yields only sour productions.

The advantages connected with this benign spirit or temper are many and various. If we compare society to a large and complex machine, this temper is like that smoothness belonging to its parts, and that oil on its wheels, by means of which it works with ease and silence. The effects of it are often seen in the peace and quietness that prevail in many a large family. It is to be observed also in the despatch and cordiality with which business is transacted in some extensive establishments. The presence of it reminds one of the calmness and serenity, sometimes, of the sky notwithstanding the activity of the heavenly bodies in performing their revolutions.

Nevertheless, it is necessary that the truly gentle individual should be endued with a capacity for resistance at different times, either by wit, humour, and sarcasm, or the stern look and sharp rebuke.

This is necessary, sometimes, to prevent the encroachment of the rude and the ignorant. We meet often with some that have not a keen sense of propriety. They are apt to take occasion from mildness

and inexperience to show their total lack of refinement both in actions and expressions. Some degree of sternness, at this time, may answer the same purpose to innocence and modesty as the prickly thorns answer to the tender and beautiful rose.

It is requisite also, at times, to prevent the imposition of the crafty and insincere. It is highly pleasing to see, occasionally, guile exposed, and evil designs thwarted, through a little tact on the part of some one that may have skill and prudence in the use of probing expressions. This is like preventing an explosion by discovering and intercepting the skillfully laid mine, while through a little ingenuity, the designing perpetrator is disclosed.

The same quality is, moreover, advantageous in order at times to escape the slights and the taunts of the proud and arrogant. It is a matter of constant occurrence that the bold and confident, if they lack candour, take pleasure in shewing their wit and weight at the expense of the shy and the timid. A counter wit or repartee, at this time, is like a stroke on the projected arm of an antagonist, by which the ball about to be thrown falls quietly to the ground, or, perhaps, hits slightly the projector himself.

Thus the combined qualities under notice render a man in some respects like the sun in the sky,

which, sometimes, shines with genial warmth and mildness, and, sometimes, envelopes itself in thick and dark clouds, and now and then sends its rays mixed with pelting showers, and, yet, the earth is benefited by each of these modifications.



THIRD SECTION.

Expansibility combined with a proper Degree of Concentration.

We use the term expansibility here, as denoting aptness in a man to take an interest in subjects within a wide range, according to their utility, and his own opportunities. The mind of the man who has this quality may be denoted free, noble, generous, and comprehensive. He is always inclined to seek some high eminence from which he can take a broad view of things; and he is always ready, according to his ability, to give a helping hand to any good movements, though he may not be immediately acquainted with the promoters.

In literature, he is not content merely with that kind of knowledge which has direct reference to his calling or profession, but he wishes also to understand something about other arts and other sciences.

In politics, he endeavours to become acquainted with the views and the arguments of those who have adopted principles different from his own. And in reference to religion, he not only observes what is being done by those of his own creed or of his own party, but he also takes an interest in the operations of all that may be called Christians. Hence, this quality is in direct contrast to narrowness and bigotry.

There are some that do not appear to attach much value to any branch of scientific knowledge, except that by which they are able to keep their credit in the discharge of their professional duties. And there are others who shew indifference towards any movements, whether civil or religious, unless they have the eminence of being under their own ensign.

These, and others that are similarly disposed, are like that ancient tribe of Scythians, of whom there was a tradition that they could breathe no air except that of their own country. But the man whom we have in view will not deem anything foreign to him that is conducive to the general welfare.

Nevertheless, while he cherishes these extensive views and habits, he is at the same time distinguished by a proper degree of concentration. By this we mean that he devotes his energies to those pursuits

which properly belong to him, and takes most interest in those objects with which he is immediately connected. He, by the combination of these qualities, is similar to our earth, which though it performs its annual revolution in harmony with the motions of the other planets, yet it daily performs a rotation which is peculiarly its own. While he endeavours to expand his mind by means of general knowledge, he in particular studies those branches which tend to help him in discharging his duties with ease and efficiency.

Though he is ready to appreciate what is excellent in others, and to shew candour in reference to their sentiments, yet, he has some tenets to which he unflinchingly adheres, and of which he will make no compromise. A pliable temper and a facility in making concessions beyond a certain point indicate a lack of deep convictions and absence of genuine love to the truth. This characteristic reminds one of that woman who because she was only a feigned mother assented to Solomon's proposal of having the child divided with a sword. But the decision and the yearning of the other instantly proved that she was the true mother.

Moreover, while this man will shew his liberal disposition in his cordiality towards others, and in his

readiness, at times, for co-operation, still, he will shew in different ways that he has his peculiar attachments and eminent predilections.

We have been amused, sometimes, as seeing a number of ravens grouping together just before going to roost. They had been flying during the day in all directions. And it might be thought, from the endless wanderings of some of them, that any company of their own species would suit them, and that any region within the horizon might serve them as a place of rest. But, when the great canopy above them begins to darken they shew, by their persevering flight, that there exists some peculiar spot which they deem their home, and that they cannot be happy until they join their intimate companions. So also the man who has the combined qualities under notice will have pleasure in visiting distant regions, where he can find truth and derive some improvement; and he will experience genuine satisfaction as mixing with brethren who have the spirit of Christianity; nevertheless, there is a yearning in his bosom, which will not be allayed until he finds himself again among his intimate associates.

FOURTH SECTION.

Liberality joined with Economy.

Discreet liberality indicates a noble disposition. It betokens a desire on the part of the agent that others may become sharers of the happiness which he himself enjoys. And the exercise of this benign temper is an occasion of cheering the mind of the benefactor himself, and of furnishing him with many pleasing recollections.

There are some that are themselves recipients from various resources which considerably swell their individual affluence ; yet, they shew inaptitude to let flow any adequate portion for the purpose of social utility. The writer amused himself on one occasion in plying, for some minutes, the handle of a pump for the purpose of getting a quantity of its water, which was famed for its good properties. But, notwithstanding the effort, nothing was forthcoming, and hence the plying was given up as labour in vain. We, sometimes, see pumping of a different kind, and for different purposes, and now and then the result shews no better success.

There are, however, many generous spirits to be found that shew readiness to impart a portion of

their own store, whether large or limited, for the purpose of alleviating surrounding sorrows, and promoting some objects of general utility. They are like a noble fruit-bearing tree, which, while it appears truly beautiful under its variegated luxuriance, is also ready to let fall some portion of its valuable load when it is agitated by a gentle gale or a moderate shaking.

But though this kind of liberality is conducive to the public welfare, and to the individual's own happiness, it cannot, ordinarily, be exercised long, unless it is joined with careful economy.

Many, through self-indulgence, exhaust all the resources from which others might derive some advantage. They are like an undrained soil, from which the elements conducive to fertility are imperceptibly carried away, while the ground is left comparatively barren and useless.

Trifling and indiscreet expenditures are also detrimental to genuine liberality. A careful self-inspector may find that what has been devoted at different times to gratify caprice, vanity, or curiosity, amounts within a limited period to a considerable sum, which had it been discreetly disposed, might, in different ways, enhance the general happiness.

This indiscretion is like constant oozing from a

vessel containing valuable liquid, and the result is a deficiency in the supply which might serve on a particular occasion.

A wise man imitates Nature in this respect. She, after furnishing us with a copious shower, avails herself of the exhalations which arise from fields, meadows, brooks, and rivers, and thus she is prepared to multiply her bounties.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE HAPPY MAN GUARDS AGAINST THOSE INCIDENTAL PECULIARITIES WHICH TEND TO LESSEN HAPPINESS.

THERE are many to be found that possess sound principles and manifest a sterling character, yet, their own comfort, and that of others, is considerably impaired owing to something eccentric in their temper or their habits. These little peculiarities detract from their genuine excellencies, just as some ill-flavour lowers the value of a beverage which may have been made of the best ingredients. We shall here only specify a few of these peculiarities.

FIRST SECTION.

Irritability.

We mean by irritability readiness to be disturbed or discomposed by trifling incidents. It bears just the same relation to anger as sparks do to a flame. These may fly about making a little crackling noise, causing a little annoyance, but no damage, unless they meet with a combustible material, and then a

flame is enkindled. The irritable man may scatter sparkling words, shewing his own excitability at unpleasant little events, but when a sentient being happens to be the object of his displeasure, then the spark of irritation becomes a flame of anger.

When the causes of this infirmity are traced, they are found to vary in different individuals. Some are constitutionally disposed to be irritable. Their nervous system may be a little out of order, and hence many things may be to them an occasion of vexation and annoyance, which would hardly disturb others that have their system a little better balanced. Or they may be subject to some little ailments which deprive them of that composure which, otherwise, they might possess. Hence, they at many unavoidable little events shew the disurbed state of their feelings, just as a sore part will give pain when it is incidentally touched or shaken.

In some, also, the infirmity under notice is the effect of early mismanagement. They, in their infancy and childhood, were petted, indulged, and spoiled. Thus traits of character were at an early period formed, which, have become more palpable after having arrived at maturity.

But the principal cause of the peculiarity is lack of self-discipline. Should a man neglect to exercise

control over himself when meeting, every day and everywhere, with little trials and provocations, the most trifling incident may deprive him of mental serenity.

And as a result of this, considerable unhappiness will be occasioned. As often as the mind is disturbed it is as unfit to take interest in any proper subject of thought and meditation as an agitated lake is incapable of reflecting different objects in the sky.

This temper tends to mar much domestic enjoyment. It is to the individual himself like the occasional raising of dust, which sullies at the time all surrounding objects. And it is as unpleasant to others as the constant creaking of a door at midnight, on account of the agitations of the wind.

He, therefore, who studies his own well-being, and the comfort of others, will endeavour to counteract this tendency. And it is well known that much can be done in this respect through care and perseverance. I heard an individual saying, that he had succeeded to have his garden comparatively clean, for as soon as any weeds appeared, they were instantly eradicated.

In like manner, when a man sets in earnest to correct his errors, and to reform his habits, the

change which takes place is most agreeable. I observed not long ago a little incident in connection with a child less than five years of age. Some one referring to an unpleasant little event, said to her, "Now you will be angry for ever with your friend for having done this." "O no," said the child, "I am not used to be angry on account of little things." The child furnished in this respect a very worthy example.



SECOND SECTION.

Censoriousness.

Suppose that we are in a company of friends, to whom a series of fine paintings is shewn, and that these differ considerably from each other as to the skill and merit which they display: suppose also that some one present should take pleasure in sullyng each painting by touching it with an unclean finger. Such a conduct would be deemed very unworthy, and it would be very annoying to the party present.

However, something analogous to this is to be found in different social circles. It may happen that an absent individual will become subject of conversation. He may have many excellencies

which tend to render his character valuable and attractive. But some one present will be sure to overlook all these, and to point to some minor faults or imperfections. The topics in relation to him will soon lose their interest, and another renowned name will be introduced. This again will be subjected to a similar scrutiny, and any real or supposed faults will be disclosed, while his good qualities will be thrown into the shade. It may be that, in the next place, some notable deed of ingenuity or benevolence will be mentioned by one of the party. But the same censor will again shew his sagacity, in tracing out circumstances that lessen its fame, or in finding motives that detract from its excellency. It is not meant here that the habit of forming a right judgment of persons and things is to be discouraged. Such a habit is necessary in order to distinguish between characters. And, at times, it is well to point out the faults of persons and performances for the purpose of mutual edification.

Nevertheless, it indicates something wrong, when the tendency to censure and detraction is predominant. Should a neighbouring pool send forth much noxious exhalation at every little agitation, this would signify that there is much muddy and foul matter at the bottom. And in like manner the

habit of censure and defamation indicate that there lodge in the heart much latent pride and pravity.

The habit tends, in various ways, to mar the individual's own happiness. It is conducive to foster in a man's bosom unkind and ignoble feelings. And these are as inconsistent with happiness as the habitual breathing of poisonous effluvia would be unfavourable to a state of health.

Besides, it is an occasion of secret remorse to a man when he considers, in his serious moments, that he has been an occasion of impugning a worthy character, or of defaming a fair reputation. Moreover, it often happens that the censor involves himself in broils and wranglings as a consequence of some indiscriminate expressions. And he finds, in course of time, that society will not forget to pay him in his own coin, for his own actions will be minutely scanned, and his faults will be freely exposed by way of retaliation. Some good men may fall, partly, into the habit. They are apt to do so if they are endued with a superior understanding combined with a stern disposition, or if they are placed in circumstances which lead them to express too freely their judgment of men and things. In such cases, the habit is an infirmity, and the wise man will be on his guard against it in order that he may

not, through indiscretion, spoil his own ease and injure the credit and comfort of others.

It is well known, that in proportion as a man advances in knowledge and experience he becomes more disposed to make allowance for imperfections, and to shew candour and gentleness in the expression of his views and judgment. And it is unnecessary to say, that the prevalence of this temper tends to enhance mutual happiness.



THIRD SECTION.

Capriciousness.

This is a characteristic implying sudden changes in a man's moods and movements, without any apparent cause. It is said, that there is a species of navel-wort which changes in its taste several times a day. The herb is acid in the morning, tasteless at noon, and bitter at night.

The man who is subject to the infirmity under notice discloses similar peculiarities. Many sudden and unaccountable changes may appear during a single day. At one time he is cheerful and joyous, at another he is sullen and morose; he

is this hour frank and communicative, but in the next he is silent and reserved. And what appears chiefly observable is, that a bystander cannot easily ascertain why and when a change takes place.

And, in reference to many of his trivial actions, what an eminent naturalist said of the goat animal is partly applicable—"He is inconstant in his passions, and irregular in his actions. He walks, stops short, runs, leaps, approaches, retires, shews and conceals himself, or flies off, as if he were actuated by mere caprice, and without any other cause than what arises from an eccentric vivacity of temper."

Many a man shows this peculiarity, though he possesses the great principles which constitute a good character, and though he proceeds uniformly with his main business.

The infirmity, however, militates against one's happiness. These rapid changes in the states of the mind must cause a discomfort, similar to that which we would experience by passing through a series of apartments that differ greatly as to the degree of temperature.

It lowers also his estimation in the sight of friends and acquaintances. They may have much regard for him notwithstanding these anomalies; still, they

cannot but consider them as a detraction from his true excellencies.

It tends, moreover, to deprive him partly of that ease and satisfaction which may be derived from mutual friendship ; for caprice causes friends to shew caution rather than confidence, and to manifest reserve rather than frankness and familiarity.

Nevertheless, this failing may, through care, be corrected or greatly modified.

One means conducive to this purpose is to consider how these little whims in one's self would appear in another. It is our tendency to be gentle and lenient towards many things belonging to ourselves, which, should they be seen in another, would receive our decided disapproval, and our sharp censure. But the reversing of the process would tend much to our self-improvement.

It would be advantageous also for the same purpose should we, on different occasions, turn our attention to the manners of a man who is habitually free from this infirmity. The decorum and dignity manifested in his conduct may incite within us considerable admiration. And as a result of this, we may be disposed to think of our own deficiencies, and may be induced to seek similar creditable qualities.

FOURTH SECTION.

Gloom or Melancholy.

This state of mind is a contrast to cheerfulness and joy, and it is often spoken of as depression of spirits. There are some that are subject to it to be found in all the stages and circumstances of the present life. It varies much as to degrees in different individuals.

In some it is only transient and occasional, in others it is almost settled and habitual. The causes of it are many and various. There are some that appear constitutionally disposed to be sad and pensive. It is well known, that there are some birds which never sing, and that there are others which sing only in low and plaintive tones. And there are in like manner some men who, from their childhood, are disposed to sadness, and are inclined to paint in melancholy colours all current events, and the different surrounding objects. Others have become gloomy on account of some great trials, by which their feelings were wounded and their prospects rendered unfavourable.

When the son and daughter of Henry I. were drowned in the sea, the father was so much affected

by the event, that as it is related, he never afterwards smiled. In the period of youth, many receive deep wounds in their affections, and meet with sore trials in consequence of inexperience, and hence a silent sorrow lodges in their bosoms, which, for a long time prevents them to display their former hilarity.

Others are pensive as the result of physical debility, brought about, in many, by some latent disease, and, in others, by their own neglect and indiscretion. Others are subject to much mental depression on account of the excessive cares, and the grievous crosses incident to some of the important duties and relations of life.

But the most effective cause of this state of mind is some moral disorder of heart. Tampering with sin against light and convictions will, as a natural consequence, involve the mind in deadly gloom.

Be the cause what it may, the prevalence of this mood is inconsistent with a happy state of mind. We have often observed the difference in our feelings, when we start out on a clear morning, enjoying the bracing air and the congenial sunshine, from what they are when we travel over the same path on a murky and foggy day. We are subject to a similar

difference of feeling according to the prevalence or absence of the temper under notice.

It is clear also, that gloom or depression tends much to impair our physical constitution. A few hours of depression will, sometimes, weaken and disorder our system more effectively than would be done by hard toil and labour for a considerable period, just as dampness for a short time would injure certain articles more than if they had been used for years.

Every man that cares for his comfort and usefulness in the world will endeavour to counteract this disposition. He will use means suitable to the ascertained cause of the disorder. If the cause is physical, he will use the physical means suggested by physiology, in order to produce reaction. If the cause is circumstantial, he will look around him in order to ascertain what efforts can be made towards alleviating the sorrow and ameliorating his condition. It is a matter of common experience, that a man may allow himself to become pensive and gloomy, whereas, through a little tact and activity, he might succeed in avoiding that which now presses upon his mind, and in placing himself in a more cheering position. If his gloom is the result of some incidents which are no longer under his control, he will

endeavour to learn the useful lesson which they suggested to him, and he will resolve, through courage and manliness, to doff from his mind their noxious influence.

If the depression is caused by moral maladies, or if it is the result of infirmity, bereavement, and destitution, a heavenly message informs us that there is a God near, to whom we can commit our cause, and who can speak peace to our souls, and give help and comfort to the weak and distressed: for he is "the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort."

Remarks were made in a preceding chapter, shewing how the gospel is adapted to dispel the gloom arising from guilt of conscience.

CHAPTER IX.

THE HAPPY MAN SHELWS IN VARIOUS PRACTICAL DUTIES THE
GENUINENESS OF HIS BELIEF.

SYSTEMATIC truths are but of little use as long as they have no more influence on a man's life than mere sentiments. It is not difficult to meet with many who, in various ways, make a considerable display, and yet they in their practice prove that they are lacking in those virtues and graces which adorn a Christian character. I remember visiting, one day, an extensive botanical garden, and I could see at the top of some beds the names of certain notable plants, but when they were searched for they could not be found. Owing to some accident the plant had disappeared, though the name remained. True Christian graces have vanished from the conduct of many, and yet they retain the names of them in profession. But the happy man aims at practising the truths which he believes. The following are some instances of the virtues which appear in his conduct.

FIRST SECTION.

Habitual repentance before God.

Repentance is genuine sorrow for sin, and departure from it in consequence of understanding its true nature. It is common for men to experience remorse and chagrin when perceiving the evil consequences of their misdeeds. But this kind of sorrow is as different from genuine repentance as the sighs of a culprit, in distress, are different from the gentle tears of a child whose heart is melted as receiving pardon from his father.

Men, when smarting under the consequences of sin may shew a disposition to renounce it; but if they have not been subject to a thorough conviction of its evil nature, they will again return to their former habits. Saul, at one time, gave a command to destroy all the witches in the land of Israel, but we are informed that, in his next distress, he sought them again, and that he, in disguise, consulted one of them that had been spared.

However, the man who is subject to genuine repentance has experienced a change in his views and judgment respecting the nature of sin, and hence he regards it with feelings totally different from those

which he had previously. Whereas, he formerly thought but little of the evil of sin, and delighted much in it on account of its deceiving pleasures, he now perceives its atrocity, sees that it is inwrought in his nature, and that he is everywhere surrounded by its snares and temptations.

And since he regards sin as a deformity in himself, and a contrariety to the nature of God, it is to him a cause of genuine sorrow, and he is induced to renounce it on all occasions.

A homely illustration may be furnished from the conduct of a hen towards a brood of ducklings which she has been fostering. In her ignorance, she sat on the eggs until they were hatched. She appeared proud of the success, but she did not understand the nature of the progeny. She brooded over the young ones and attended them most carefully for several weeks. But, gradually, she begins to understand what they really are, then she appears to be cooled towards them; afterwards, she shews neglect and indifference, and finally she attacks them as enemies. Many a man remembers a time when he cherished in his mind various pleasing imaginations, little suspecting that there was any evil attached to them. These thoughts and imaginations were hatched into visible actions, and the individual, for a time,

congratulated himself on the success of his projects.

But through some means, his mind was enlightened to see the true nature of the things in which he had taken so much pleasure. And, consequently, instead of regarding his achievements with delight and approbation, he considers them as follies and crimes, calling for abasement and contrition, and he deals towards them as deadly foes to his best interests.

To understand the true nature of sin is the result of being spiritually enlightened. It is surprising what change takes place in a man's notions respecting some things, in consequence of having his powers merely strengthened and improved. An individual after having arrived at manhood, wonders at some of his pursuits and amusements during the years of childhood. The improvement which has taken place in his nature is an occasion of a great contrast between the state of his mind in a past period of his life and what the state of the same mind is at present. But the contrast is still more striking between the feelings of a man when leading a godless life and those of the same man after being made subject to genuine repentance. He is now divinely enlightened, and hence he has in the highest sense the views and feelings which are proper to

man. The result of this is that he regards his past follies and irregularities with shame and contrition.

Tradition tells us, that a woman whose name was Accho was almost bewildered as seeing in a mirror, for the first time, her own ugly features. Similarly, when any man through some means perceives for the first time the moral perversity of his own character, he becomes subject to intense grief and sorrow. Still, it is sorrow mixed with consolation, for it implies a secret hope of God's pardon. And this hope calms and soothes the mind just as a gentle shower allays the dust raised by a brisk breeze after a long drought. The goodness of God leadeth to repentance. When the heart is graciously influenced, every experience of God's bounty and favour makes a man feel and acknowledge his own unworthiness. He resembles in this respect a tender herb, which is seen, sometimes, bending towards the ground after having received the dew of heaven.

Many know from experience that this is a happy frame of mind. It is often seen that high hills are bleak and barren, while the low valleys are clothed with verdure, and are refreshed with many sparkling rills and rivulets. So also the high-minded are destitute of peace and comfort, while the humble and contrite enjoy genuine consolation.

SECOND SECTION.

Self-restraint.

This implies ability to control one's self. It is a power exercised by a man over his own appetite, desires, passions, words and actions, so as to keep, habitually, within the bounds of propriety.

Self-restraint is of great importance both to the individual himself and to others with whom he has any connections. No one would like to travel in a train unless he would be conscious that the engineer has power over the locomotive, so as to have the ability of making it start and stop at the appointed stations, and of causing it to quicken and to slacken speed according to necessity. But it is much more dangerous to proceed in our career through the world without having a control over the active principles of our nature.

Self-restraint involves the necessity of not proceeding generally to the extreme length of what may be deemed legitimate. Should a cup be filled to the very brim, it would require a remarkably steady hand in order that the liquid may not be spilled on the cup being removed. So also should an individual habituate himself to proceed with certain

practices to the very boundaries of right and reputation, he would be in great danger of passing beyond the proper limits on different occasions.

The exercise of this power over one's self implies also guard against what is evil, and an endeavour to check it at the very beginning.

The greatest errors and crimes have originated in a thought or a suggestion. This also may have been elicited by what was merely trivial or accidental. How necessary, then, it is that what may be so serious in its consequences should be guarded against at its very commencement.

It was this truth, probably, that was taught in the mythic tale respecting Pandora's box.

When Epimetheus was induced, from curiosity, to open that box, there issued from it a multitude of evils and distempers, which dispersed themselves in all directions. This tradition may suggest to us the practical lesson, that trifling with what is evil, from whatever motives, may lead us to very serious consequences. One great danger of entering upon any wrong course is, that a man, by so doing, loses partly the power of checking himself, and hence he is gradually led to results which he had not anticipated. There belongs to our nervous system a class of nerves which have the property of a reflex

action. When any nerve belonging to this class is acted upon, a man will have no control over the indirect process that will follow : his will may be at the time against it, yet the action will be inevitable. There is something analogous to this belonging to our moral system. When a man dallies with things that are exciting and stimulating, he is in danger of being carried beyond all proper limits, notwithstanding his previous resolutions.

With a view to the same object, a man ought to keep aloof from things which are at the time of a doubtful character. A good while ago, the writer was travelling by rail, proceeding on a long journey. The train had started from one of the stations, and was beginning to increase in speed, but suddenly a stop was made, and then there was a retrograde movement. The passengers became a little alarmed. But they were soon told that the cause of the irregularity was something doubtful in the appearance of the signals, and hence the engineer very wisely retreated. But when it was found that there was no real cause of alarm, he again proceeded with confidence. We, in our course through the world, have now and then doubts respecting the propriety of proceeding in certain directions, and he who has control over himself will pause until these doubts are removed.

Moreover, self-restraint implies discretion as to the mode adopted for checking the evil of our nature.

A man may have, for several reasons, a desire for counteracting certain propensities ; but since he aims at this in a wrong way, he may, habitually, be foiled. No man by mere physical force can stop a mill when in motion ; however, there is at hand convenient means by which this can easily be effected—by stopping or turning the stream which puts it in motion. A man's nature may be compared to a most ingenious machine. It will produce various results according as man will allow it to be acted upon by different external agents. But in order to preserve its safety and usefulness, it is necessary to regulate the stream of stimulating supplies.

This suggests to us the propriety of observing habitual temperance and discreet abstemiousness.

It is to be observed also, that the judicious use of what is right and allowable tends to give a man power of restraining himself from what is wrong and injurious. The enjoyment of proper liberty may check a tendency to become refractory and rebellious ; marriage may prevent impurity and voluptuousness ; and rational comfort and recreation may stifle the desires for vicious indulgences. In this respect

Saul the King of Israel made, on one occasion, a great mistake. He, from some capricious motives, issued a command forbidding his army to touch the honey which was dropping from the trees around them. The next account which we have of them is, that they "flew upon the spoil, and took sheep, and oxen, and calves, and slew them on the ground, and the people did eat them with the blood."

However, this instance of ruthlessness and barbarity was the natural result of Saul's indiscretion in forbidding to them the use of what was both lawful and convenient.



THIRD SECTION.

Integrity or uprightness of conduct towards others.

By integrity here we mean such conduct as shall not, by words or actions, injure others in their feelings, property, or reputation. A man can no more be happy without integrity than a man can be healthy while subject to chronic sores and ulcers. Human society is like an ingenious arch, which is strong and beautiful as long as the stones forming it are in their respective places. But should one of them become loose, a portion of the arch will unavoidably fall down, causing loss and trouble. A whole family

is sometimes distressed through the faithlessness of one of its members.

The malice or dishonesty of one individual may cause damage and disorder throughout an extensive establishment. A few unprincipled men may disturb a whole community. A man who, for the sake of some supposed advantage, knowingly injures another cannot be happy. He is destitute of that ease and self-esteem which are connected with self-approbation. And he is subject to shame and remorse at times of serious reflection. Owing also to a secret principle of moral retribution which silently acts in our world, it often happens, that the advantage gained at the expense of injuring another turns out to be damaging to the individual himself.

Hence, the event is sometimes similar to that which happened to him who hurled a sword towards the sky, and it returned falling on his own pate.

The integrity which we have in view is expansive and beautiful in its operations. It is like a fine tree which has a main trunk growing up straightly, and from this, branches shoot forth in all directions. By the main trunk we understand a heart upright in its operations towards God ; by the branches projecting in different directions we mean the various practical

duties which devolve upon us—obedience to parents, kindness to brothers and sisters, deference to superiors, veracity in statements, attention to engagements, punctuality and diligence in business, and faithfulness with regard to all concerns that may be deemed matters of trust and honour. A tree of this kind “bringeth forth fruit in its season, its leaf also shall not wither.” A conduct of this kind cannot but make a favourable impression on the minds of others, both with regard to the agent himself and the religion which he professes.

I have heard a friend relating an incident connected with a man who had a thrashing machine to sell. The man spoke of it in very laudatory terms, stating that it had been made on the latest and best principles. But another man, who was partly disposed to come to some terms, adroitly said, “I know not much about principles. I wish to see how the machine will work.” As an application of the saying to the point in hand, it may be said, that it is in vain for a man to praise the principles which he professes, unless he also observes fair dealings and kind demeanour in his transactions with others. It is through this that he will secure their commendation.

FOURTH SECTION.

The discharging ordinary Duties from high Motives.

The motive by which every man ought to be influenced cannot be more explicitly declared than is done in one Scripture admonition, "Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God." As long as a man is under the influence of his native principles, his views are selfish, contracted, and grovelling. But a spiritual renovation expands, purifies, and elevates a man's mind, just as solar heat warms and expands the air, and causes it to ascend upwards. Nevertheless, it is found in the ordinary course of things, that when a man acts in subservience to the Lord's will, and with a view to his glory, even his own advantage is at the same time secured. We see in a clock that there are two hands, and that their motions are a little different, and yet that they are in beautiful harmony, and that at the end of each day they meet together, and point to the same direction. The glory of God and a man's best interests are like these two hands, most wisely combined: the connection, however, is not always clearly discernible; still by viewing the result in the whole circle of a man's life, the two appear to be conjoined in the most pleasing manner.

To act from this motive confers upon a man's life true excellence and dignity. It is like stamping the royal image on coin, by which it is rendered current money.

The principles from which we act on different occasions may not be easily discerned by casual observers. The satisfaction that we act from true and high motives is to be obtained from consciousness in our own bosoms. Some time since, I was at a neighbouring town on a day which happened to be the birthday of the Prince of Wales. On that day also the Mayor of that town had just been elected, and the different bells of the town were ringing to celebrate both events. A venerable old man who happened to walk with me, said, as listening to the bells, "It is difficult to know to-day for whom the bells are ringing, whether for the Mayor or for the Prince." Still, each man that was pulling at the rope knew for whom he was playing that part, and he expected his reward accordingly. It is difficult for the crowd to know what the motives are by which any particular individual is influenced as to his public actions; but he, like the man pulling at the rope, is conscious of the real fact, and he is subject to self-censure or self-approbation, according as personal interest or the glory of God is predominant.

FIFTH SECTION.

Renewed Efforts after Falls and Failures.

A great source of evil and misery are heartlessness and discouragement after being, through some means, unfortunately, overcome. There are instances of many who, in an unguarded hour, and through some allurements, fell into vice and folly, though they previously were remarkable for their consistent character. When they reflected, afterwards, on what had taken place, they became subject to much shame, gloom and chagrin. They imagined that they had totally lost their reputation, and that there was little or no hope for its recovery. The effect of the wrong step, or the failure, on their subsequent conduct was, that they partly lost the delicacy for which they were previously characterised; they began to yield more readily to various temptations, and they became more regardless of future consequences. They acted towards themselves just as a man does sometimes towards new clothes in consequence of some mishap to them. He, at first, is very careful of them, and avoids everything by which they may be befouled or bemired; but should some unfavourable incident happen to them, he loses that carefulness, and he

would not grieve much should they be stained still more.

However, the happy man, if he has fallen, will endeavour to rise again ; if he has been wounded he will try to have his wounds healed ; and instead of indulging in fruitless sorrow and despair, he will consider what good use can be made of his mournful experience.

The writer found, on one occasion, his watch stopping, and afterwards going irregularly, without any apparent cause. But the fact that it went afterwards aright, without any alteration made, proved that the irregularity was owing to some incidental influence, while the mechanism within was right. A man of sound principles may, at times, shew some irregularities in consequence of surrounding agencies ; but he will soon, like the good watch, indicate a tendency to self-adjustment or rectification.

There belongs to our constitutions an inherent power of healing and reparation ; otherwise every scratch might be fatal, and every malady might be incurable. And there is something analogous to this in the mind of the man who has been endued with spiritual life. Hence, instead of sinking under moral wounds and maladies, he will, with energy, avail him-

self of the ordained means within his reach for their cure and prevention.

To a man who is thus disposed, even his blunders and falls may be an occasion of a great reformation.

I have heard of a man who, unfortunately, had a crooked leg. He also met with a serious accident, by which this leg was fractured. However, when the bones were again set, and the wound was healed, the old crooked leg was as straight as the other. The moral crookedness of many a man has been cured, in like manner, in consequence of some unfavourable events, by which he was led to serious reflection and repentance.

CHAPTER X.

THE HAPPY MAN DISPLAYS SOME SPECIAL VIRTUES ADAPTED
TO PECULIAR EVENTS AND CIRCUMSTANCES.

It is the object, in this chapter, to show how the principles specified in the preceding pages are reduced to practice on some unusual occasions. There exist, it appears, some plants having certain properties which they do not disclose until their seed is taken into another climate, and the plants are caused to grow under different conditions. So also, the happy man has some qualities which are not shown to advantage until he is brought into some trying circumstances. It is, however, to be considered that the best have their failings and infirmities. Hence, as we seldom can find a person who fully answers to a supposed model of beauty, so also we cannot find a man, who, on trying occasions, does not show several imperfections. Some of the qualities which we have in view are the following :—

FIRST SECTION.

Firmness and Constancy of Conduct at a time of general Defection.

There are times which are a trial of principles. Men are subjected to a trial of the kind when a large number appear to be shy of the peculiar truths of Christianity; when many professors of religion manifest much laxity in their general conduct; when a prevalent worldly spirit causes many to be totally regardless of their highest interests; when scepticism becomes bold and daring in its attacks; when some errors and superstitions gain ground; and when various vices become rampant in the land. And as a storm proves what trees have but little roots, and as a general epidemic discloses unsound constitutions, so also a time of general defection shows who are lacking in thorough Christian principles. But it proves that a man is influenced by high motives should he endeavour to maintain habitual fellowship with God, though seeing many examples and opportunities of devotion to the world; should he conscientiously attend to the duties of the sanctuary, when many that are equal, if not superior, to him in position, seek ease and amuse-

ment; should he observe Christian strictness when a large number exhibit laxity and irresolution.

It was much to the credit of Caleb that, when he was surrounded by a multitude who showed discontent and disaffection, he manifested "another spirit," so that he was not, in the least, influenced by their example; but, on the contrary, he adhered unflinchingly to the Divine promise, and persevered unswervingly in the prescribed direction.

Some are naturally more independent in their judgment and conduct than others are, even with regard to ordinary matters. And the same quality is partly shown when they come to act in reference to things of greater importance.

And when a man who is naturally unstable comes under the influence of gracious principles, he begins to have a definite object in view, by which his conduct is rendered comparatively firm and consistent. Grace in the heart is like instinct in our nature, which is rather constant and regular in its operations. "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water." And it is a perpetual well which continues to bubble forth when many intermittent springs flow no more.

Much inconstancy is sometimes shown as the result of the fluctuation of affairs and fortunes.

Prosperity is an occasion of inflating the minds of some, and of estranging their hearts from religion. It acts upon them like untimely sunshine on a beehive, in consequence of which the inmates take the wing and wander, at random, until they are allured by something that promises to them rest.

On the other hand, the effects of adversity are equally injurious on the minds of others. It proves them to be like birds of passage in our country, which, as soon as winter approaches, will then disappear. But a man of sound principles, though his feelings may vary, yet he will not, in consequence of external events, vary much in his conduct. He resembles a firm oak-tree which may be exposed to the wind from different directions, yet because it has deep roots it maintains its position.

When men are governed by motives of self-interest they manifest inconstancy in the path of duty. We find a sacred writer disclaiming entirely this trait of character. "The things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea, yea, and nay, nay?" He teaches us, that his conduct was not regulated by events according as they happened to be agreeable to his natural feelings, or conducive to his personal interest. We often see on a fine day many turning out

in their carriages for the sake of health and amusement; but when the rain and the storm come they are not to be seen. The mail-man, however, continues to run his daily course, whether it be a storm or a calm, rain or sunshine. We have in the conduct of the latter an emblem of the man who, in duties of a different nature, shows himself constant and faithful.

It is hardly necessary to state that this Christian constancy is conducive to a man's happiness. It may, at times, subject him to minor trials; yet, he is delivered from the harass and confusion which are, sometimes, caused when the mind is influenced by conflicting motives. Besides, there is attending it a secret blessing, the value of which cannot be easily estimated. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna."

SECOND SECTION.

Aptness to make due Improvement of unusual Visitations.

"Verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth." There are visitations of His both towards individuals and towards communities, which are sometimes

of a reformatory and sometimes of a judicial character. And it only indicates hardness of heart, and a stoical spirit, when this truth is not freely acknowledged. Most events, that are of an afflictive character, have natural causes, and since these can in some degree be traced, many take occasion to be regardless of them as eliciting any moral suggestions from God to man. And this leads to a godless frame of mind, just as was the case with the Egyptians, who, because they saw their magicians performing something like the signs exhibited by the hand of Moses, thought that there was nothing Divine in what they had seen, and thus their hearts were hardened. However, when men are brought to actual distress through some event, or course of events in Providence, they are induced, by a kind of secret intuition, to think of their own sins, to regard the equity and power of God, and to acknowledge the need of repentance.

But it is a happy state of mind should a man, though free from credulity and superstition, have aptness to understand the warnings given him in some visitations, and should he be disposed to feel and act accordingly. "The Lord's voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it." The

barometer is so constructed as to indicate the state of the atmosphere. It rises and falls, according as there exist in the air elements of a calm or of a storm. A rectified heart is analogous to this instrument. It has a capability to take and give warning when the moral atmosphere is saturated with dangerous elements. "O Lord, I have heard Thy speech and was afraid." When men of this kind see vices of various sorts abounding, when they see strange inconsistencies in the conduct of some that profess love to the truth, when they are aware that the Gospel, with its most solemn appeals, has been ineffectual for the reformation of many of its hearers, when they see that a large class, who have influence and opportunities, are negligent in suppressing immorality, when they see attempts to remove some of the greatest bulwarks against profanity, and should they under these circumstances see some public calamities beginning to appear, they cannot but regard them as visitations from God, and having a loud call upon men. One of the great benefits expected from improvement in meteorology is skill in understanding the approach of storms, so as to avoid serious catastrophes. Similarly, one of the advantages arising from the moral and spiritual improvement of the heart, is aptness to understand the meaning of Divine

warnings, so as to know what are the necessary precautions. The happy man does take warning, and betakes himself to humiliation and repentance. He, through this, avoids some serious consequences. It is said that some of the inferior animals, which inhabit localities in which earthquakes are frequent, understand, through some means, when a calamity of the kind is about to happen, and that they run away in alarm, before the people in these places understand that there is any danger. Thus many men, also, are wise enough to take warning in time from intimations given them in various ways, and through genuine repentance they betake themselves to a place of safety. It is not supposed that a good man is not a sharer in the distress incident to a public calamity. But when he is left to suffer, this is made conducive to his highest improvement, and in his sufferings he often receives something from the afflicting hand which soothes his mind and alleviates his distress. "I trembled in myself," said the prophet, "that I might rest in the day of trouble." He did not mean the trembling which consists merely in that natural agitation to which men are subject in a time of danger and trouble; but he had in view that pious sensibility which incites sacred awe and genuine contrition whenever God manifests His holy nature

in rebukes and chastisements. In proportion as any one is subject to this, he has "rest in the day of trouble." Comfort is administered to him, by which he is delivered from immoderate anxiety. Moreover, it is certain that when a good use is made of gentle chastisements, this is a means of averting serious judgments. A kind father will not use harsh means should a few gentle strokes answer the purpose. And "as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him."

In reference, therefore, to any visitation that wears the aspect of a Divine judgment, there is a difference in the views and habits of the man under notice from those of others who are strangers to his principles. The case may be illustrated by supposing that a man has a chronic disease in some inward organ, and that he also has a small wound on his arm, and that the inward disorder is an occasion of irritating continually the external wound. A common peasant who visits the patient sees only the wound, and applies means with the intention of curing that only, and he has little or no notion of the inward disorder. It would not then be a wonder should all his efforts to cure the wound be proved to be ineffectual. But a skilful physician perceives at once the connection between the two complaints. And he first of all

uses means adapted to cure the inward disease, and, in connection with this, he applies a remedy to the external wound. And this treatment is likely to be successful. When a public calamity happens, many regard only natural causes, and they seek relief only through the use of ordinary means. They are like the peasant in the preceding supposition. But a thorough Christian will make immediate reference to the moral maladies of the human heart, and he will endeavour to have these cured. But in connection with this, he will be as ardent as any about him in using natural means for the purpose of preventing threatened evils.



THIRD SECTION.

A Peaceable and Conciliating Spirit in the midst of Farring Elements.

This is a result of the various virtues which adorn a gracious character. Genuine humility counteracts the spirit of strife and contention. True meekness implies a tendency to forbear with incidental weaknesses and provocations. Love or charity disposes a

man to cover the imperfections of others, to forgive injuries, and to do good even to those from whom he has received harm. A discovery has recently been made by means of which the explosion of powder may be prevented. And explosions of a different kind might be hindered were these benign principles generally prevalent. It has hence been very properly said, "If Christian nations were nations of Christians, all war would be impossible and unknown amongst them." In proportion, then, as men become humble, meek, and charitable, they are disposed to show candour towards others who may be different from them in temperament, convictions, and mode of life, and they manifest readiness to unite when any important matter calls for their co-operation. Cold bars of metal are stiff and rigid, but when they are thrown together in a furnace, they are soon welded, and are so closely united, that it would be difficult to distinguish one from the other. Men naturally have their respective private interests, and they are disposed to adhere rigidly and exclusively to these. They have also their own ways and manners, from which they are not inclined, from charitable considerations, to deviate. But when men come under the influence of the Divine Word, which is like fire as to its power and effects, they become yielding and

pliable, and their hearts are united in mutual sympathy and expansive benevolence.

A spirit of sympathy and mutual concession is adapted to prevent much mischief. The writer had an opportunity, some years ago, of inspecting a machine made to crush hard substances. And the guide directed his attention to a contrivance by means of which certain parts might give way a little when something harder than usual came between the wheels, and thus the machine was preserved from being deranged. As observing that arrangement, it was easy to make the following inference, that the peace of families and the safety of societies depend much on the yielding and conciliatory disposition of their members.

It is not expected, however, that men, in their present state, will be one in the sense of entertaining no different views and sentiments. This would be just as reasonable as to expect all to be of the same height, or to have every foot to fit the same shoe. True religion rather exhibits unity under diversity. It is in this respect like the rainbow which has various colours, but these are so neatly combined as to form one beautiful bow. Or it is like the breastplate borne by the high-priest, in which were fitted most valuable gems, the onyx, the topaz, and the emerald ;

these differed in their properties, yet they formed one glorious breastplate, and they were all worn by the same high-priest.



FOURTH SECTION.

*Hope and Cheerfulness notwithstanding great Trials
and various Discouragements.*

It has often been seen that natural courage and resolution are not sufficient to support the human mind under certain pressures. The most courageous men, when meeting with some events, are apt to be like the flower described in poetry, which had its head heavy, and was bending towards the ground from excess of moisture; and when it was laid hold of and handled with a jerk, its beautiful petals all gave way, and they fell together to the ground. Some noble minds, when they have nothing but what is natural to support them, are overcome by adversity, and they settle down in grief and sorrow.

But there is a hope to be obtained which is adapted to counteract the baneful influence of

various misfortunes. We mean the hope which is grounded on the power, the mercy, and faithfulness of God as revealed in His Word. We are told of some plants which have the property of climbing, should they not meet with suitable objects on which they may lean, that their tendrils will soon appear shrivelled, and that the whole plant will exhibit symptoms of deadness and decay. Genuine hope must also have suitable supports. "I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." But it is surprising what a man will be able to go through, and to endure, when his mind is properly sustained. We have been interested, sometimes, at seeing a man plunging in a diving-bell into a great depth of water, in order to perform some difficult task at the bottom. It appeared a wonder that he could live and move under such circumstances. But the wonder was partly lessened when the tubes, by means of which he obtained his breath, appeared. Some have been thrown into depths of a different nature, and yet they have been there safely preserved. And some of them have told us what were the means of their safety. "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord." Hope was to them like a

tube supplying them with elements of consolation. And they encourage others to use the same means: "Let Israel hope in the Lord."

Natural feelings may vary in consequence of disease and the infirmities of old age, but even then a hope resting on Divine promises, which are ever sure and stable, is adapted to make the mind serene and cheerful. These varying feelings are like intervening clouds in the day-time, but the calm comfort of hope is like the light which we enjoy, though the body of the sun may be invisible. The cheerfulness connected with this hope, cannot be enjoyed without care to cherish habitual integrity. It is immediately destroyed by dallying with sin, just as a man loses his breath when he descends into mephitic air.

Men meet sometimes with sore trials, the loss of health, reverses of fortune, and domestic crosses and bereavements. And as a result they feel themselves under a pressure of gloom and sorrow. But as the frail snow-drop lives and grows though covered with a load of snow, and as it makes its modest but cheering appearance as soon as this is cleared away, so they, through the influence of a gracious hope, are supported under their pressures. and by their habitual serenity and cheerfulness, they shew that they have received no harm.

CHAPTER XI.

THE HAPPY MAN CHERISHES IN HIMSELF THE SPIRIT OF
DEVOTION.

DEVOTION implies habitual and complacent inclination of the mind towards God. The native tendency of the mind is to forget God, and to live in alienation from him. Hence, it is the result of a gracious change in a man's heart if his mind is directed towards God in serious thoughts and fervent affections.

Devotion is in our nature like an exotic plant, which requires great care and constant tenderness in order that it may be kept vigorous and flourishing. Supposing that a man is endued with the great principles of godliness, yet, it is not without much effort and diligence, on his part, that he can maintain within himself the spirit of devotion; just as the priests had daily duties to perform at the altar in order to keep alive the fire which, at the consecration, had descended from heaven.

The following are some of the means adapted to this purpose.

FIRST SECTION.

Guard against Vain Thoughts and Loose Imaginations.

It is a part of our moral disorder, that our minds have become unstable with regard to objects that are holy and spiritual. And, for this reason, we in our best devotional duties are like a man who tries to write in a moving carriage: the scrawls, the notches, and the crookedness, are indications of the disadvantageous position of the writer.

Without some control over the mind, so as to check vain thoughts, we are as unfit to receive impressions from holy and divine objects as a lake would be unlikely to reflect bodies in the sky when it is agitated by various gales. It was no wonder therefore that a sacred writer said "I hate vain thoughts," and that another gave a caution "That ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk in the vanity of their minds."

It is of importance that good thoughts are cherished when we first awake in the morning, and during the first portion of the day. It appears, with regard to our physical nature, that some unfavourable influence in the morning is by far more injurious, than if the same thing happened at a later hour. Be this as it may, it is certain in reference to our moral system, that to begin each day with God is a great help to preserve the spirit of devotion.

Habitual efforts against vain thoughts tend to weaken their power and frequency. We are told, that there are some bodily maladies the force of which may be in some degree weakened through a strong resolution. We cannot guarantee that this is the case. However, it is clear, with regard to the moral disorder under notice, that it may be greatly weakened through habitual resistance.

SECOND SECTION.

Care to avoid those external influences which are injurious to Devotion.

We are surrounded by agencies and influences which are unfavourable to devotion. We meet with them at home and abroad ; in our callings and with our amusements ; in our intercourse with friends and enemies, domestics and companions.

Our senses, our passions, and our natural inclinations may all be avenues to something that tends immediately to unfit us for devout and spiritual exercises. Our Great Teacher gave a warning concerning some of these dangers. "Take heed to yourselves lest at any time your hearts be overcharged.....with drunkenness and the cares of this world." Indulgence in habits of the kind would be as effective to check and deaden every devout emotion, as opening a vein would be to exanimate a good constitution.

Should even a godly man fall, accidentally, into one or the other of these, the lamentable effects would soon be experienced by himself, and, probably, would become apparent to others. There would be a loss of inward composure, lack of pleasure or delight in holy meditations, and a perceptible languidness in the discharge of holy duties. It is not known how much the abounding intemperance of our country tends to darken the minds of many, and to paralyze their best feelings, so as to render them totally incapable of genuine devotion; just as a soil soaked with water, from want of drainage, is unfit to yield abounding and luxuriant crops.

Worldly pursuits, when followed with too much ardour, or from motives of avarice and ambition, tend immediately to stifle all devotional feelings. It was for this reason that He, who perfectly understands man and thoroughly knows the world, said, "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon."

There are cares which are unavoidable. In order to pass through the world quietly and decently, a man must give attention to secular concerns, and must exercise diligence in his avocation. But the burden which is thus laid upon us, according to the natural course of things, is generally tolerable, and it may be borne without our being greatly unfitted for duties of another nature. But those cares which are the result

of the native vanity of the human mind, and are caused by the instability and insatiableness of a disordered heart, render the mind unfit for devotion; just as an overloaded ship is made incapable of steering properly in her voyage. "They that will be rich fall into a temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition."

We might dilate on the various ways in which worldliness is destructive of devotion, but we must for the present keep within certain limits.

Other things might be named that are equally injurious, such as the voluntary contact with godless characters. He who does this is like one entering into a district in which the air is noxious, and which, consequently, may impair the best constitution.



THIRD SECTION.

Diligent use of the Means appointed for cherishing Devotion.

By these means we understand habitual reading of the Scriptures, and other books of devotion; observance of family prayer and praise; keeping the Sabbath; and attendance on the various public ordinances. The use of these means is so necessary for the purpose in view as feeding a lamp with oil is in order to preserve

a burning flame. In those countries which are irrigated, chiefly, by means of a river which flows through the land, the inhabitants make small channels in different directions, by means of which each individual secures a supply for his own premises. Salvation and its blessings may be compared to a noble river flowing through our land, and when we rightly observe the various ordinances, we, in a manner, make channels by which we appropriate a supply of the water of life to ourselves.

Means of grace are Divine appointments, and as such, when we use them aright, they are adapted to make us better.

The importance of a Divine ordinance was clearly taught to the people of Israel in what they witnessed concerning the supply of manna in the desert. When they went out to seek it on either of the days on which God ordained to give it, they found it in abundance; but when they, regardless of His institution, went to seek it on the seventh day, they were totally disappointed.

Men may neglect means which have a Divine origin, and may choose modes of devotion in accordance with their own views, yet experience will ultimately prove that the blessing is to be obtained by reverential observance of His own institutions.

CHAPTER XII.

THE HAPPY MAN SPENDS THE PRESENT LIFE WITH A VIEW
TO ETERNITY.

NOTHING is more conducive to solemnize a man's mind than the thought that he is to exist for ever. When this truth is duly considered, it puts an end to all frivolity, it induces a man to ponder his steps, and it makes him feel the incalculable importance connected with his existence. We are furnished with an idea of sublimity, mingled with the emotion of seriousness, when we from an elevation view a space which apparently has no limits, and in which there is no intervening object to attract our attention. But, how much more suitable such an emotion is when we view ourselves as destined to exist when time will be no more? We can imagine a crisis, in a remote future period, in which the present system of nature will undergo a complete revolution; when all earthly materials will be dissolved, when the sun in the sky will be extinguished, and the whole host of visible stars will be swept away. But even should such stupendous changes take place in reference to natural objects, the soul of man, as being immortal,

will survive this grand catastrophe. No man therefore can be deemed wise who excludes such a truth as this from his consideration, and no man can be considered happy, whatever may be his present enjoyment, without having a well-grounded hope for being happy throughout eternity. This subject has a beneficial influence on a man's mind in the present life.

FIRST SECTION.

Reference to Eternity helps to explain much that, otherwise, would be Mysterious in Connection with Man in his Present State.

It is clear that man is endued with vast intellectual powers. Proofs of this are continually seen in abundance. Though the majority of people greatly neglect their own minds, yet there are instances enough showing that man's powers are capable of almost unlimited expansion.

I. And it is not easy to conceive why such powers are given to man, supposing that he is destined only for his present state. The inconsistency would be similar to that of planting the seed of a huge oak in a small flower bed, or of building a majestic ship to steer in an ordinary

rivulet. Besides, man has powerful moral emotions. He has something within him by which his own actions are approved or condemned. And there is connected with this approval the most exquisite satisfaction; and with the condemnation, the most intolerable remorse. And, should we suppose that man is destined only for his present state, there appears something disproportionate in his nature to his condition. His powerful emotions render him in his present state like a bird in a cage, which is capable of expatiating in endless space.

II. Moreover, it is seen that a large number of human beings are removed from this state before their powers had an opportunity for being developed. The millions of infants that die seem to have existed a little while to no purpose, supposing that there exists no future world.

III. Besides, our moral sentiments make us think of an over-ruling Judge, and we are led to expect that He who has implanted principles of rectitude in our nature will show truth and perfect equity in His administration. Still, when we look around us, we behold much apparent incongruity, since we often see the innocent suffering from injustice, and the wicked escaping with impunity. But much of what is dark and perplexing disappears in the light of

eternity. When we refer in our minds to an invisible and eternal world, we see that man's present life is only introductory and preparatory to another state; that his wonderful powers are like germs, which, after they are transposed by death into another soil, will acquire their full development; that many of the inconsistencies of the present life are partly trials by which the wicked and the virtuous are distinguished; and that all, hereafter, will be dealt with according to their respective characters. Sometimes the discovery of some great natural law is a means of clearing away many apparent anomalies. And as the discovery of such a law is a means of explaining many natural processes, so also, reference to a future state tends to give light on many things belonging to man that appear inconsistencies.



SECOND SECTION.

It tends to give Weight and Stability to a Man's Character.

I. It makes a man feel the dignity which belongs to his nature.

When a man has a conviction in his mind of the truth of a future state, he experiences, as an immediate effect, a tendency to abstain from all

pursuits and practices that are unworthy of himself. He will have high notions of the conduct which is befitting to a rational creature. He will regard the manner in which many spend their life as being totally unworthy of beings that are to exist eternally. His feelings, in reference to many of the ordinary practices, will be similar to those of a well-bred youth, who, conscious of the dignity of his rank, disdains many of the habits incident to a low life. He would be disposed, at times, to commune with himself in a strain like the following: "If I regard any worldly acquisitions as my chief treasure, if I make even literary eminence as a main object, if I have an immoderate desire for animal gratifications, and if I waste my time in following idle amusements, would this be a state of mind suitable to me who am endued with an immortal soul, and would this be a course of life becoming to me, who am placed under such solemn responsibilities, and am destined for such high purposes?" In this manner, a man under the influence of the truth under notice becomes, in some degree, resolute to withstand the evil propensities of his nature, and vigilant in guarding against temptations arising from the world and evil companions.

II. It destroys the power of alluring temptations.

Sometimes when a man's attention is fixed on some interesting object that happens to be before his eyes, he becomes comparatively deaf to different sounds about him. So also, when a man has his thoughts, in some degree, fixed on his future destiny, the allurements of sin and the world have, at the time, with regard to him, but little influence. When even a secular or scientific object engages a man's mind, it acts beneficially in regulating his conduct and establishing his character.

It is said of Columbus, that when the existence of a land in the far West became fixed in his mind, the idea influenced his entire conduct; it gave an elevation to his spirit, and a dignity and loftiness to his whole demeanour. His views were lofty and princely, and he conferred with sovereigns almost with a feeling of equality. Such was the influence of that grand notion on his mind. When others, therefore, are convinced of the reality of a future state, and have their affections attracted by the promises of spiritual privileges, it is not marvellous that they indicate a dignified disposition, and show courage in withstanding alluring temptations. We have a striking instance of this in the conduct of Moses. "He chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the

pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he had respect to the recompense of the reward. He forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible."

THIRD SECTION.

It is conducive to support and console the Mind when meeting the various Events of the Present Life.

This is proved from facts in daily experience. Those who spend their present life keeping in view the other world, are found, whether rich or poor, to be better fortified than others are to meet the various trials which may befall them in their earthly course. How often it has been the case, that men who have been placed in fortunate circumstances, on meeting with adverse events, have their minds overcome with gloom, and their spirits preyed upon by incessant grief so as to verify the saying, "The sorrow of the world worketh death." On the other hand, it is found that some were once highly favoured in a worldly sense, and were afterwards reduced to great adversity; yet, since they were taught by a gracious influence to

consider the transitoriness of all earthly objects, and to secure for themselves a treasure in the eternal world, when they found worldly losses and disappointments abounding, they were enabled to endure the misfortune with a degree of cheerfulness. Should any one pay a visit to a number of poor and afflicted, but genuine, Christians, in some part of a town, he would find, as a general rule, that notwithstanding their poverty, pain, and many discomforts, they are comparatively happy, and that they are more disposed to express gratitude than murmuring. And should he, further, inquire into the cause of their patience and resignation, he would find that it is the result of confidence in an invisible Saviour and of a well-grounded hope for endless bliss in another state.

I have read of a chair of such an ingenious construction, that a man by sitting on it might be much at ease notwithstanding the turnings and tossings incident to a sea voyage. It is, however, certain that reference in our minds to invisible and eternal objects is equally effective in staying the mind in the midst of the many agitations belonging to our spiritual voyage.

“We are troubled,” says Paul, “on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in

despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." And he, further on, gives a reason for that constancy: "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

A man who looks forward to eternity and places his affections in heaven, needs not despond or be disconsolate, though he may, at times, witness much darkness and confusion.

It is said of the bird of paradise, that when he instinctively understands there is a storm approaching, he takes the wing, and ascends on high, and flies at ease above the region of the storm. A Christian, in like manner, when fearing tempests of another nature, may take the wings of meditation and holy affections, so as to ascend to the region of heavenly and eternal things, where he may enjoy peace and serenity.

FINIS.

